

ONE OF THEM
COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. 533.

ONE OF THEM BY CHARLES LEVER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS

VOL. 838.

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

1852

ONE OF THEM.

BY

CHARLES LEVER,

AUTHOR OF "CHARLES O'MALLEY," ETC.

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VOL. I.

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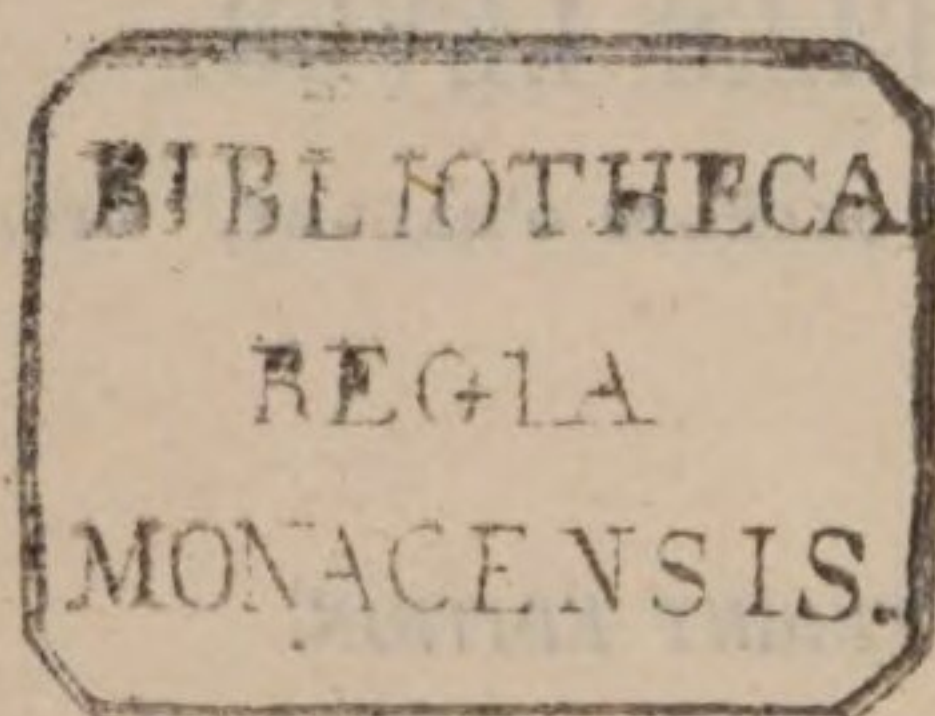
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A WORD OF APOLOGY FOR MY TITLE.

BEFORE I begin my story, let me crave my reader's indulgence for a brief word of explanation, for which I know no better form than a parable.

There is an Eastern tale — I forget exactly where or by whom told — of a certain poor man, who, being in extreme distress, and sorely puzzled as to how to eke out a livelihood, bethought him to give out that he was a great magician, endowed with the most marvellous powers, amongst others, that of tracing out crime, and detecting the secret history of all guilty transactions. Day after day did he proclaim to the world his wonderful gifts, telling his fellow-citizens what a remarkable man was amongst them, and bidding them thank Destiny for the blessing of his presence. Now, though the story has not recorded whether their gratitude was equal to the occasion, we are informed that the Caliph heard of the great magician, and summoned him to his presence, for it chanced just at the moment that the royal treasury had been broken into by thieves, and gems of priceless value carried away.

"Find out these thieves for me," said the Caliph, "or with your own head pay the penalty of their crime."

"Grant me but forty days, O king," cried he, "and I will bring them all before you."

So saying, he went away, but no sooner at home and in the solitude of his own house, than he tore his beard, beat his breast, and humbling his head to the ground, cried out, "Son of a burned father was I, not to be content with poverty and a poor existence! Why did I ever pretend to gifts that I had not, or dare to tell men that I possessed powers that were not mine? See to what vainglory and boastfulness have brought me. In forty days I am to die an ignominious death!"

Thus grieving and self-accusing, the weary hours passed over, and the night closed in only to find him in all the anguish of his sorrow; nor was it the least poignant of his sufferings, as he bethought him that already one of his forty days was drawing to its close, for in his heart he had destined this period to enjoyment and self-indulgence.

Now, though aspiring to the fame of a magician, so little learning did he possess, that it was only by recourse to a contrivance he was able to reckon the days as they passed, and calculate how much of life remained to him. The expedient he hit upon was

to throw each night into an olive-jar a single date, by counting which at any time he could know how many days had elapsed.

While his own conscience smote him bitterly for the foolish deception he had practised, there were, as it happened, others who had consciences, too, and somewhat more heavily charged than his own. These were the thieves who had stolen the treasure, and who firmly believed in the magician's powers. Now, it so chanced, that on the very instant he was about to throw his first date into the jar, one of the robbers had crept noiselessly to the window, and peering through the half-closed shutter, watched what was doing within. Dimly lighted by a single lamp, the chamber was half shrouded in a mysterious gloom; still, the figure of a man could be descried, as, with gestures of sorrow and suffering, he approached a great jar in the middle of the room and bent over it. It was doubtless an incantation, and the robber gazed with all eagerness; but what was his terror as he beheld the man drop something into the jar, exclaiming, as he did so, in a loud voice, "Let Allah be merciful to us! there is one of them!" With the speed of a guilty heart he hurried back to his confederates, saying, "I had but placed my eye to the chink, when he knew that I was there, and cried, 'Ha! there is one of them!'"

It is not necessary that I should go on to tell how

each night a new thief stole to the window at the same critical moment to witness the same ceremony, and listen to the same terrible words; as little needful to record how, when the last evening of all closed in, and the whole robber band stood trembling without, the magician dropped upon his knees, and throwing in the last of his dates, cried out, "There are all of them!" The application of the story is easy. You, good reader, are the Caliph — the mock magician is myself. Our tale will, probably, from time to time, reveal who may be

"ONE OF THEM."

ONE OF THEM.

CHAPTER I.

A Piazza after Sunset.

ONE of the most depressing and languid of all objects is the aspect of an Italian city in the full noon of a hot summer's day. The massive buildings, fortress-like and stern, which show no touch of life and habitation; the glaring streets, untraversed by a single passer; the wide Piazza, staring vacantly in the broiling sun; the shop doors closed, all evidencing the season of the siesta, seem all waiting for the hour when long shadows shall fall over the scorched pavement, and some air — faint though it be — of coming night recal the population to a semblance of active existence.

With the air of a heated wayfarer, throwing open his coat to refresh himself, the city, at last, flings wide jalousie and shutter, and the half-baked inhabitant strolls forth to taste the "bel fresco." It is the season when nationalities are seen undisturbed by the presence of strangers. No travellers are now to be met with; the heavy rumbling of the travelling-carriage no longer thunders over the massive causeway; no postilion's whip awakes the echoes of the Piazza; no landlord's bell summons the eager household to the deep-

arched doorway. It is the People alone are abroad—that gentle Italian people, quiet-looking, inoffensive as they are. A sort of languid grace, a kind of dignified melancholy, pervades their demeanour, not at all unpleasing; and if the stranger come fresh from the west of Europe, with its busy turmoil and zeal of money getting, he cannot but experience a sense of calm and relief in the aspect of this easily satisfied and simple population. As the gloom of evening thickens the scene assumes more of life and movement. Vendors of cooling drinks, iced lemonades, and such-like, move along with gay flags flaunting over the brilliant urn-like copper that contains the refreshing beverage. Water-melons, in all the gushing richness of colour, are at every corner, and piles of delicious fruit lie under the motley glare from many a paper lantern. Along the quays and bridges, on wide terraces or jutting bastions, wherever a breath of fresh air can be caught, crowds are seated, quietly enjoying the cool hour. Not a sound to be heard, save the incessant motion of the fan, which is, to this season, what is the cicala to the hot hour of noon. One cannot help feeling struck by the aspect of a people come thus to blend, like the members of one large family. There they are, of every age, and of every condition, mingling with a sort of familiar kindliness, that seems like a domesticity.

In all this open-air life, with its inseparable equality, one sees the embers of that old fire which once kindled the Italian heart in the days of their proud and glorious Republics. They are the descendants of those who, in the self-same spots, discussed the acts of Doges and Senates, haughty citizens of states, the haughtiest of all their age — and now —

Whether come by chance, or detained by some accident, two English travellers were seated one evening in front of the Café Doney, at Florence, in contemplation of such a scene as this, listlessly smoking their cigars; they conversed occasionally, in that "staccato" style of conversation known to smokers.

One was an elderly, fine-looking man, of that hale and hearty stamp we like to think English; the young fellow at his side was so exactly his counterpart in lineament and feature, that none could doubt them to be father and son. It is true that the snow-white hair of one was represented by a rich auburn in the other, and the quiet humour that lurked about the father's mouth was concealed in the son's by a handsome moustache, most carefully trimmed and curled.

The café behind them was empty, save at a single table, where sat a tall, gaunt, yellow-cheeked man, counting and recounting a number of coins the waiter had given him in change, and of whose value he seemed to entertain misgivings, as he held them up one by one to the light and examined them closely. In feature he was acute and penetrating, with a mixture of melancholy and intrepidity peculiarly characteristic; his hair was long, black, and waveless, and fell heavily over the collar of his coat behind; his dress was a suit of coffee-coloured brown — coat, waistcoat, and trousers; and even to his highpeaked conical hat the same tint extended. In age he might have been anything, from two-and-thirty to forty, or upwards.

Attracted by an extraordinary attempt of the stranger to express himself in Italian to the waiter, the young Englishman turned round, and then, as quickly leaning down towards his father, said, in a subdued voice,

"Only think; there he is again! The Yankee we met at Meurice's, at Spa, Ems, the Righi, Como, and Heaven knows where besides! There he is talking Italian, own brother to his French, and with the same success too!"

"Well, well, Charley," said the other, good-humouredly, "it is not from an Englishman can come the sneer about such blunders. We make sad work of genders and declensions ourselves; and as for our American, I rather like him, and am not sorry to meet him again."

"You surely cannot mean that. There's not a fault of his nation that he does not, in one shape or other, represent; and, in a word, he is a bore of the first water."

"The accusation of boredom is one of those ugly confessions which ennui occasionally makes of its own inability to be interested. Now, for my part, the Yankee does not bore me. He is a sharp, shrewd man, always eager for information."

"I'd call him inquisitive," broke in the younger.

"There's an honest earnestness, too, in his manner — a rough vigour —"

"That recalls stump-oratory, and that sledge-hammer school so popular 'down west.'"

"It is because he is intensely American that I like him, Charley. I heartily respect the honest zeal with which he tells you that there are no institutions, no country, no people to be compared with his own."

"To me, the declaration is downright offensive; and I think there is a wide interval between prejudice and an enlightened patriotism. And when I hear an American claim for his nation a pre-eminence, not alone in

courage, skill, and inventive genius, but in all the arts of civilisation and refinement, I own I'm at a loss whether to laugh at or leave him."

"Take my advice, Charley, don't do either; or, if you must do one of the two, better even the last than the first."

Half stung by the tone of reproof in these words, and half angry with himself, perhaps, for his own petulance, the young man flung the end of his cigar away, and walked out into the street. Scarcely, however, had he done so when the subject of their brief controversy arose, and approached the Englishman, saying, with a drawling tone and nasal accent, "How is your health, stranger? I hope I see you pretty well?"

"Quite so, I thank you," said the other, cordially, as he moved a chair towards him.

"You've made a considerable tour of it" — (pronounced 'tower') — "since we met, I reckon. You were bound to do Lombardy, and the silkworms, and the rice-fields, and the ancient cities, and the galleries, and such-like — and you've done them?"

The Englishman bowed assent.

"Well, Sir, so have I, and it don't pay. No, it don't! It's noways pleasing to a man with a right sense of human natur' to see a set of half-starved, squalid loafers making a livin' out of old tombs and ruined churches, with lying stories about martyrs' thumb-nails and saints' shin-bones. That won't make a people, Sir, will it?"

"But you must have seen a great deal to interest you, notwithstanding."

"At Genōa, Sir. I like Genōa — they're a wide-

awake, active set there. They've got trade, Sir, and they know it."

"The city, I take it, is far more prosperous than pleasant, for strangers?"

"Well now, Sir, that ere remark of yours strikes me as downright narrow, and, if I might be permitted, I'd call it mean illiberal. Why should you or I object to people who prefer their own affairs to the pleasant task of amusing us?"

"Nay, I only meant to observe that one might find more agreeable companions than men intently immersed in money-getting."

"Another error, and a downright English error, too; for it's one of your national traits, stranger, always to abuse the very thing that you do best. What are you as a people but a hard-working, industrious, serious race, ever striving to do this a little cheaper, and that a little quicker, so as to beat the foreigner, and with all that you'll stand up and say there ain't nothing on this univarsal globe to be compared to loafing!"

"I would hope that you have not heard this sentiment from an Englishman."

"Not in them words, not exactly in them terms, but from the same platform, stranger. Why, when you want to exalt a man for any great service to the state, you ain't satisfied with making him a loafer — for a lord is just a loafer, and no more nor no less — but you make his son a loafer, and all his descendants for ever. What would you say to a fellow that had a fast trotter, able to do his mile, on a fair road, in two forty-three, who, instead of keeping him in full working condition, and making him earn his penny, would just turn him out in a paddock to burst himself with clover,

and the same with all his stock, for no other earthly reason than that they were the best blood and bone to be found anywhere? There ain't sense or reason in that, stranger, is there?"

"I don't think the parallel applies."

"Maybe not, Sir; but you have my meaning; perhaps I piled the metaphor too high; but as John Jacob Byles says, 'If the charge has hit you, it don't signify a red cent what the wadding was made of.'"

"I must say I think you are less than just in your estimate of our men of leisure," said the Englishman, mildly.

"I ain't sure of that, Sir; they live too much together, like our people down south, and that's not the way to get rid of prejudices. They've none of that rough-and-tumble with the world as makes men broad-minded, and marciful, and forgiving; and they come at last to that wickedest creed of all, to think themselves the superfine salt of the earth. Now there ain't no superfine salt peculiar to any rank or class. Human natur' is good and bad everywhere — ay, Sir, I'll go further, I've seen good in a Nigger!"

"I'm glad to hear you say so," said the Englishman, repressing, but not without difficulty, a tendency to smile.

"Yes, Sir, there's good amongst all men, even the Irish."

"I feel sorry that you should make them an extreme case."

"Well, Sir," said he, drawing a long breath, "they're main ugly — main ugly, that's a fact. Not that they can do *us* any mischief. Our constitution is a mill where there's never too much water — the

more power, the more we grind; and even if the stream do come down somewhat stocked with snags and other rubbish upon it, the machine is an almighty smasher, and don't leave one fragment sticking to the other when it gets a stroke at 'em. Have you never been in the States, stranger?"

"Never. I have often planned such a ramble, but circumstances have somehow or other always interfered with the accomplishment."

"Well, Sir, you're bound to go there, if only to correct the wrong impressions of your literary people, who do nothing but slander and belie us."

"Not latterly, surely. You have nothing to complain of on the part of our late travellers."

"I won't say that. They don't make such a fuss about chewing and whittling, and the like, as the first fellows; but they go on a sneering about political dishonesty, Yankee sharpness, and trade rogueries, that ain't noways pleasing — and what's more, it ain't fair. But as *I* say, Sir, go and see for yourself, or, if you can't do that, send your son. Isn't that young man there your son?"

The young Englishman turned and acknowledged the allusion to himself by the coldest imaginable bow, and that peculiarly unspeculative stare so distinctive in his class and station.

"I'm unreasonable proud to see you again, Sir," said the Yankee, rising.

"Too much honour!" said the other, stiffly.

"No it ain't — no honour whatever. It's a fact, though, and that's better. Yes, sir, I like *you*!"

The young man merely bowed his acknowledgment, and looked even more haughty than before. It was

plain, however, that the American attached little significance to the disdain of his manner, for he continued in the same easy, unembarrassed tone:

"Yes, Sir, I was at Lucerne that morning when you flung the boatman into the lake that tried to prevent your landing out of the boat. I saw how you buckled to your work, and I said to myself, 'There's good stuff there, though he looks so uncommon conceited and proud.'"

"Charley is ready enough at that sort of thing," said the father, laughing heartily; and, indeed, after a moment of struggle to maintain his gravity, the young man gave way and laughed too.

The American merely looked from one to the other, half sternly, and as if vainly trying to ascertain the cause of their mirth. The elder Englishman was quick to see the awkwardness of the moment, and apply a remedy to it.

"I was amused," said he, good-humouredly, "at the mention of what had obtained for my son your favourable opinion. I believe that it's only amongst the Anglo-Saxon races that pugnacity takes place as a virtue."

"Well, Sir, if a man hasn't got it, it very little matters what other qualities he possesses. They say courage is a bull-dog's property; but would any one like to be lower than a bull-dog? Besides, Sir, it is what has made *you* great, and *us* greater."

There was a tone of defiance in this speech evidently meant to provoke a discussion, and the young man turned angrily round to accept the challenge, when a significant look from his father restrained him. With a few common-place observations dexterously thrown out,

the old man contrived to change the channel of conversation, and then, reminded by his watch of the lateness of the hour, he apologised for a hasty departure, and took his leave.

"Well, was I right?" said the young man, as he walked along at his father's side. "Is he not a bore, and the worst of all bores too — a quarrelsome one?"

"I'm not so sure of that, Charley. It was plain he didn't fancy our laughing so heartily, and wanted an explanation which he saw no means of asking for; and it was, perhaps, as a sort of reprisal he made that boastful speech; but I am deeply mistaken if there be not much to like and respect in that man's nature."

"There may be some grains of gold in the mud of the Arno there, if any one would spend a life to search for them," said the youth, contemptuously. And with this ungracious speech the conversation closed, and they walked on in silence.

CHAPTER II.

The Villa Caprini.

It was a few days after the brief scene we have just recorded that the two Englishmen were seated, after sunset, on a little terraced plateau in front of an antiquated Villa. As they are destined to be intimate acquaintances of our reader in this tale, let us introduce them by name — Sir William Heathcote and his son Charles.

With an adherence to national tastes which are rapidly fading away, they were enjoying their wine

after dinner, and the spot they had selected for it was well chosen. From the terrace where they sat, a perfect maze of richly wooded glens could be seen, crossing and recrossing each other in every direction. From the depths of some arose the light spray of boiling mountain torrents; others, less wild in character, were marked by the blue smoke curling up from some humble homestead. Many a zig-zag path of trellis-vines straggled up the hill-sides, now, half buried in olives, now, emerging in all the grotesque beauty of its own wayward course. The tall maize and the red lucerne grew luxuriously beneath the fig and the pomegranate, while here and there the rich soil, rent with heat, seemed unable to conceal its affluence, and showed the yellow gourds and the melons bursting up through the fruitful earth. It was such a scene as at once combined Italian luxuriance with the verdant freshness of a Tyrol landscape, and of which the little territory that once called itself the Duchy of Lucca can boast many instances.

As background to the picture, the tall mountains of Carrara, lofty enough to be called Alps, rose, snow-capped and jagged in the distance, and upon their summits the last rays of the setting sun now glowed with the ruddy brilliancy of a carbuncle.

These Italian landscapes win one thoroughly from all other scenery, after a time. At first they seem hard and stern; there is a want of soft distances; the eye looks in vain for the blended shadows of northern landscape and that rustic character so suggestive of country life; but in their clear distinctness, their marvellous beauty of outline, and in that vastness of view

imparted by an atmosphere of cloudless purity, there are charms indisputably great.

As the elder Englishman looked upon this fair picture, he gave a faint sigh, and said, "I was thinking, Charley, what a mistake we make in life in not seeking out such spots as these when the world goes well with us, and we have our minds tuned to enjoyment, instead of coming to them careworn and weary, and when, at best, they only distract us momentarily from our griefs."

"And my thought," said the younger, "was, what a blunder it is to come here at all. This Villa life was only endurable by your Italian noble, who came here once a year to squabble with his 'Fattore' and grind his peasants. He came to see that they gave him his share of oil and didn't water his miserable wine; he neither had society nor sport. As to our English country-house life, what can compare with it!"

"Even that we have over-civilised, making it London in everything — London hours, London company, topics, habits, tastes, all smacking of town life. Who, I ask you, thinks of his country existence, now-a-days, as a period of quietness and tranquil enjoyment? Who goes back to the shade of his old elms to be with himself or some favourite author that he feels to like as a dear friend?"

"No; but he goes for famous hunting and the best shooting in Europe, it being no disparagement to either that he gets back at evening to a capital dinner and as good company as he'd find in town."

"May is of *my* mind," said Sir William, half triumphantly; "she said so last night."

"And she told me exactly the reverse this morning,"

said the younger. "She said the monotony of this place was driving her mad. Scenery, she remarked, without people, is pretty much what a panorama is, compared to a play."

"May is a traitress; and here she comes to make confession to which of us she has been false," said Sir William, gaily, as he arose to place a chair for the young girl who now came towards them.

"I have heard you both, gentlemen," said she, with a saucy toss of her head, "and I should like to hear why I should not agree with each and disagree afterwards, if it so pleased me."

"Oh! if you fall back upon prerogative —" began Sir William.

"I have never quitted it. It is in the 'sovereignty of my woman's will that I reconcile opinions seemingly adverse, and can enjoy all the splendours of a capital and all the tameness of a village. I showed you already how I could appreciate Paris; I mean now to prove how charmed I can be with the solitudes of Marlia."

"Which says, in plain English," said the young man, "that you don't care for either."

"Will you condescend to be a little more gallant than my cousin, Sir," said she, turning to Sir William, "and at least give me credit for having a mind and knowing it?"

There was a pettish half-seriousness in her tone that made it almost impossible to say whether she was amused or angry, and to this also the changeful expression of her beautiful features contributed, for, though she smiled, her dark grey eyes sparkled like one who invited a contradiction. In this fleeting trait was the

secret of her nature. May Leslie was one of Fortune's spoiled children — one of those upon whom so many graces and good gifts had been lavished, that it seemed as though Fate had exhausted her resources, and left herself no more to bestow.

She had surpassing beauty, youth, health, high spirits, and immense wealth. By her father's will she had been contracted in marriage with her distant relative, Charles Heathcote, with the proviso that if, on attaining the age of nineteen, she felt averse to the match, she should forfeit a certain estate in Wales, which had once belonged to the Heathcotes, and contained the old residence of that family.

Sir William and his son had been living in the retirement of a little German capital, when the tidings of this wardship reached them. A number of unfortunate speculations had driven the Baronet into exile from England, and left him with a pittance barely sufficient to live in the strictest economy. To this narrow fortune Charles Heathcote had come back, after serving in a most extravagant Hussar regiment, and taken his part in an Indian campaign, and the dashing soldier first heard, as he lay wounded in the hospital, that he must leave the service, and retire into obscurity. If it had not been for his strong affection for his father, Charles would have enlisted as a private soldier, and taken his chance for future distinction, but he could not desert him at such a moment, nor separate himself from that share of privation which should be henceforth borne in common; and so he came back, a bronzed, brave soldier, true-hearted and daring, and, if a little stern, no more so than might be deemed natural in

one who had met such a heavy reverse on the very threshold of life.

Father and son were at supper in a little arbour of their garden, near Weimar, when the post brought them the startling news that May Leslie, who was then at Malta, would be at Paris in a few days, where she expected to meet them. When Sir William had read through the long letter of the lawyer, giving an account of the late General Leslie's will, with its strange condition, he handed it to his son, without a word.

The young man read it eagerly: his colour changed once or twice as he went on, and his face grew harder and sterner ere he finished. "Do you mean to accept this wardship?" asked he, hurriedly.

"There are certain reasons for which I cannot decline it, Charley," said the other, mildly. "All my life long I have been Tom Leslie's debtor, in gratitude, for as noble a sacrifice as ever man made. We were both suitors to your mother, brother officers at the time, and well received in her father's house. Leslie, however, was much better looked on than myself, for I was then but a second son, while he was the heir of a very large estate. There could not have been a doubt that his advances would have outweighed mine in a father and mother's estimate, and as he was madly in love, there seemed nothing to prevent his success. Finding, however, in a conversation with your mother, that her affections were mine, he not only relinquished the place in my favour, but, although most eager to purchase his troop, suffered me, his junior, to pass over his head, and thus attain the rank which enabled me to marry. Leslie went to India, where he married, and we never met again. It was only some seven or eight months

ago I read of his being named governor of a Mediterranean dependency, and the very next paper mentioned his death, when about to leave Calcutta."

"It is, then, most probable that when making this will, he had never heard of our reverses in fortune?" said the young man.

"It is almost certain he had not, for it is dated the very year of that panic which ruined me."

"And, just as likely, might never have left such a will, had he known our altered fortunes?"

"I'm not so sure of that: at all events, I can answer for it that no change in our condition would have made Tom Leslie alter the will, if he had once made it in our favour."

"I have no fancy for the compact, read it how you may," said Charles, impatiently; "nor can I say which I like least, the notion of marrying a woman who is bound to accept me, or accepting a forfeit to release her from the obligation."

"I own it is — embarrassing," said Sir William, after a moment's hesitation in choosing a suitable word.

"A downright indignity, I'd call it," said the other, warmly, "and calculated to make the man odious in the woman's eyes, whichever lot befel him."

"The wardship must be accepted, at all events," said Sir William, curtly, as he arose and folded up the letter.

"You are the best judge of that; for if it depended upon *me* —"

"Come, come, Charley," said Sir William, in his tone of habitual kindness, "this life of quiet obscurity and poverty that we lead here has no terrors for *me*. I have been so long away from England, that if I went

back to-morrow I should look in vain for any of my old companions. I have forgotten the habits and the ways of home, and I have learned to submit myself to twenty things here which would be hardships elsewhere, but I don't like to contemplate the same sort of existence for *you*: I want to speculate on a very different future; and if — if — Nay, you need not feel so impatient at a mere conjecture."

"Well, to another point," said the young man, hastily. "We have got, as you have just said, to know that we can live very comfortably and contentedly, here, looking after our celery and seakale, and watching our silver groschen; are you so very certain that you'd like to change all this life, and launch out into an expensive style of living, to suit the notions of a rich heiress, and, what is worse again, to draw upon *her* resources to do it?"

"I won't deny that it will cost me severely, but, until we see her and know her, Charley, until we find out whether she may be one whose qualities will make our sacrifices easy —"

"Would you accept this charge if she were perfectly portionless, and without a shilling in the world?"

"If she were Tom Leslie's daughter, do you mean?"

"Ay, any one's daughter."

"To be sure I would, boy: and if I were only to consult my own feelings in the matter, I'd say that I'd prefer this alternative to the other."

"Then I have no more to say," said the son, as he walked away.

Within a month after this conversation, the little cottage was shut up, the garden wicket closed with a heavy padlock, and to any chance inquirer after its

late residents, the answer returned was, that their present address was Place Vendôme, Paris.

"Tell me your company," said the old adage; but, alas! the maxim had reference to other habits than our present day ones. With what company now does not every man mix? Bishops discuss crime and punishment with ticket-of-leave men; fashionable exquisites visit the resorts of thieves; "swell people" go to hear madrigals at Covent Garden; and, as for the Ring, it is equally the table-land to peer and pickpocket. If, then, you would hazard a guess as to a man's manners, now-a-days, ask not his company, but his whereabouts. Run your eye over the addresses of that twice-remanded insolvent, ranging from Norfolk-street, Strand, to Berkeley-square, with Boulogne-sur-Mer, St. John's Wood, Cadiz, the New Cut, Bermondsey, and the Edgeware-road, in the interval, and say if you cannot, even out of such slight materials, sketch off his biography.

"The style is the man," says the adage; and we might with as much truth say, "the street is the man." In his locality is written his ways and means, his manners, his morals, his griefs, joys, and ambitions. We live in an age prolific in this lesson. Only cast a glance at the daily sacrifices of those who, to reside within the periphery of greatness, submit to a crushing rent and a comfortless abode. Think of him, who, to date his note "—street, Berkeley-square," denies himself honest indulgence, all because the world has come to believe that certain spots are the "Regions of the Best," and that they who live there must needs be that grand English ideal — respectable.

Dear me, what unheard-of sacrifices does it demand of humble fortunes to be Respectable! what pinching,

and starving, and saving! what self-denial and what striving! what cheerless little dinner parties to other Respectables! what dyeing of black silks and stoving of old ostrich feathers! And how and wherefore have we wandered off in this digression! Simply to say, that Sir William Heathcote and his ward were living in a splendid quarter of Paris, and after that rambled into Germany, and thence to Como and down to Rome, very often delighted with their choice of residence, enjoying much that was enjoyable, but still, shall we own it, never finding the exact place they seemed to want, nor exactly the people with whom they were willing to live in intimacy. They had been at Baden in the summer, at Como in the late autumn, at Rome in the winter, at Castellamare in the spring — everywhere in its season, and yet somehow — And so they began to try that last resource of bored people — places out of the season and places out of common resort — and it was thus that they found themselves at Florence in June and in Marlia in July.

CHAPTER III.

Travelling Acquaintance.

ABOUT the same hour of the same evening which we have just chronicled, a group of persons sat under some spreading chesnut-trees beside a brawling little rivulet at the Bagni de Lucca. They were travellers, chance acquaintances thrown together by the accidents of the road, and entertained for each other those varied sentiments of like and dislike, those mingled distrusts, suspicions, and beliefs which, however unconsciously

to ourselves, are part of the education travelling impresses, and which, when long persevered in, make up that acute, but not always amiable, individual we call "an old traveller."

We are not about to present them all to our reader, and will only beg to introduce to his notice a few of the notabilities then present. Place aux dames! then; and, first of all, we beg attention to the dark-eyed, dark-haired, and very delicately featured woman who in half-mourning, and with a pretty but fantastically costumed girl beside her, is working at an embroidery-frame close to the river. She is a Mrs. Penthony Morris, the wife or the widow — both opinions prevail — of a Captain Penthony Morris, killed in a duel, or in India, or alive in the Marshalsea, or at Baden-Baden, as may be. She is striking-looking, admirably dressed, has a most beautiful foot, as you may see where it rests upon the rail of the chair placed in front of her, and is, altogether, what that very smartly dressed, much-beringed, and essenced young gentleman near her has already pronounced her, "a stunning fine woman." He is a Mr. Mosely, one of those unhappy young Londoners whose family fame is ever destined to eclipse their own gentility, for he is immediately recognised, and drawlingly do men inquire some twenty times a day, "Ain't he a son of Trip and Mosely's, those fellows in Bond-street?" Unhappy Trip and Mosely! why have you rendered yourselves so great and illustrious? why have your tasteful devices in gauze, your "sacrifices" in chalis, your "last new things in grenadine," made such celebrity around you, that Tom Mosely, "out for his travels," can no more escape the shop than if he were languishing as a customer over a

"sweet article in white tarlatane?" In the two comfortable arm-chairs side by side sit two indubitable specimens, male and female, of the Anglo-Saxon family: Mr. Morgan, that florid man, wiping his polished bald head, and that fat lady fanning with all her might. Are they not English? They are "out," and, judging from their recorded experiences, only dying to be "in" again. "Such a set of cheating, lying, lazy set of rascals are these Italians! Independence, sir; don't talk to me of that humbug! What they want is English travellers to fleece and English women to marry." Near to these, at full length, on two chairs, one of which reclines against a tree at an angle of about forty degrees, sits our Yankee acquaintance, whom we may as well present by his name, Leonidas Shaver Quackinboss; he is smoking a "Virginian" about the size of a marshal's bâton, and occasionally sipping at a "cobbler," which with much pains he has compounded for his own drinking. Various others of different ranks and countries are scattered about, and in the centre of all, at a small table with a lamp, sits a short, burly figure, with a strange mixture of superciliousness and drollery in his face, as though there were a perpetual contest in his nature whether he would be impertinent or amusing. This was Mr. Gorman O'Shea, Member of Parliament for Inchabogue, and for three weeks a Lord of the Treasury when O'Connell was king.

Mr. O'Shea is fond of public speaking. He has a taste for proposing, or seconding, or returning thanks that verges on a passion, so that even in a private dinner with a friend he has been known to arise and address his own companion in a set speech, adorned with all the graces and flowers of post-prandial elo-

quence. Upon the present occasion he has been, to his great delight, deputed to read aloud to the company from that magic volume by which the Continent is expounded to Englishmen, and in whose pages they are instructed in everything, from passports to pictures, and drilled in all the mysteries of money, posting, police regulations, domes, dinners, and Divine service by a Clergyman of the Established Church. In a word, he is reciting John Murray.

To understand the drift of the present meeting, we ought to mention that, in the course of a conversation started that day at the table d'hôte, it was suggested that such of the company as felt disposed might make an excursion to Marlia to visit a celebrated Villa there, whose gardens alone were amongst the great sights of Northern Italy. All had heard of this charming residence; views of it had been seen in every print-shop. It had its historical associations from a very early period. There were chambers where murders had been committed, conspiracies held, confederates poisoned. King and Kaiser had passed the night there; all of which were duly and faithfully chronicled in "John," and impressively recited by Mr. Gorman O'Shea in the richest accents of his native Doric. "There you have it now," said he, as he closed the volume; "and I will say, it hasn't its equal anywhere for galleries, terraces, carved architraves, stuccoed ceilings and frescoes, and all the other balderdash peculiar to these places."

"Oh, Mr. O'Shea, what profanation!" interposed Mrs. Morris; "walls immortalised by Giotto and Cimabue!"

"Haven't they got stunning names of their own?" broke in Quackinboss. "That's one of the smartest

dodges to secure fame. You must be something out of the common. There was a fellow up at Syracuse town-land, Measles, North Carolāina, and his name was Flay Harris; they called him Flea —”

“That ceiling of the great hall was a work of Guido’s, you said?” inquired Mrs. Morris.

“A pupil of Guido’s, a certain Simone Affretti, who afterwards made the designs for the Twelve Apostles in the window of the chapter-room at Sienna,” read out Mr. O’Shea.

“Who can vouch for one word of all that, Sir?” burst in Mr. Morgan, with a choleric warmth. “Who is to tell *me*, Sir, that you didn’t write that, or Peter Noakes, or John Murray himself, if there be such a man.”

“I can vouch for the last,” said a pale, gentle-looking young fellow, who was arranging the flies in a fishing-book under a tree at a little distance. “If it will relieve you from any embarrassments on the score of belief, I can assist you so far.”

If there was a faint irony in this speech, the mild look of the speaker and his softened accents made it seem of the very faintest, and so even the bluff Mr. Morgan himself appeared to acknowledge.

“As *you* say so, Mr. Layton, I will consent to suppose there is such a man; not that the fact, in the slightest degree, touches my original proposition.”

“Certainly not, Tom,” chimed in Mrs. Morgan, in a thick voice, like one drowning.

“But if you doubt Guido, you may doubt Raphael, Titian, Michael Angelo,” burst in Mrs. Morris, with a holy terror in her voice.

"Well, ma'am, I'm capable of all that — and worse."

What that "worse" was there is no saying, though possibly Mr. Mosely was trying to guess at it in the whisper he ventured to Mrs. Morris, and which made that lady smile incredulously.

"I now, Sir, rise to put the original motion," said O'Shea, assuming that parliamentary tone which scandal pretended he displayed everywhere but in the House: "is it the opinion of this committee that we should all go and visit the Villa Caprini?"

"Are we quite sure it is to be seen," interposed Mr. Layton; "it may be occupied, and by persons who have no fancy to receive strangers."

"The observation strikes me as singularly narrow and illiberal, Sir," burst in Morgan, with warmth. "Are we of the nineteenth century to be told that any man — I don't care how he calls himself — has a vested right in the sight or inspection of objects devised, and designed, and completed centuries before he was born?"

"Well put, Tom — remarkably well put," smothered out Mrs. Morgan.

"Will you say, Sir" — assumed he, thus cheered on to victory — "will you say, Sir, that if these objects, frescoes, bas-reliefs, or whatever other name you give them, have the humanising influence you assume for them — which, by the way, I am quite ready to dispute at another opportunity with you or that other young gentleman yonder, whose simpering sneer would seem to disparage my sentiment —"

"If you mean me, Sir," took up Mr. Mosely, "I wasn't so much as attending to one word you said."

"No, Tom, certainly not," burst in Mrs. Morgan,

answering with energy some suddenly ejaculated purpose of her wrathful spouse.

"I simply meant to say," interposed Layton, mildly, "that such a visit as we propose might be objected to, or conceded in a way little agreeable to ourselves."

"A well-written note, a gracefully worded request, which nobody could do better than Mr. Alfred Layton —" began Mrs. Morris, when a dissenting gesture from that gentleman stopped her. "Or perhaps," continued she, "Mr. Gorman O'Shea would so far assist our project?"

"My motion is to appear at the bar of the house — I mean at the gate-lodge — sending in our names, with a polite inquiry to know if we may see the place," said Mr. O'Shea.

"Well, stranger, I stand upon your platform," chimed in Quackinboss; "I'm in no manner of ways 'posted' up in your Old World doings, but I'd say that you've fixed the question all straight."

"Show-places are show-places; the people who take them know it," blurted out Mr. Morgan. "Ay, and what's more, they're proud of it."

"They are, Tom," said his wife, authoritatively.

"If you'd give me one of them a present, for the living in it, I'd not take it. No, Sir, I'd not," reiterated Morgan, with a fierce energy. "What is a man in such a case, Sir, but a sort of appraiser, a kind of agent to show off his own furniture, telling you to remark that cornice, and not to forget that malachite chimney-piece?"

"Very civil of him, certainly," said Layton, in his low, quiet voice, which, at the same time, seemed to quiver with a faint irony.

"No, Sir, not civil, only boastful; mere purse-pride, nothing more."

"Nothing, Tom — absolutely nothing."

"What's before the house this evening — the debate looks animated?" said a fine bright-eyed boy of about fourteen, who lounged carelessly on Layton's shoulder as he came up.

"It was a little scheme to visit the Villa Caprini, my Lord," said Mosely, not sorry to have the opportunity of addressing himself to a person of title.

"How jolly, eh, Alfred? What say you to the plan?" said the boy, merrily.

Layton answered something, but in a tone too low to be over-heard.

"Oh, as to that," replied the boy, quickly, "if he be an Englishman who lives there, surely some of us must know him."

"The very remark I was about to make, my Lord," smiled in Mrs. Morris.

"Well, then, we agree to go there, that's the main thing," said O'Shea. "Two carriages, I suppose, will hold us; and, as to the time, shall we say to-morrow?"

To-morrow was unanimously voted by the company, who now set themselves to plot the details of the expedition, amidst which not the least knotty was, who were to be the fellow-travellers with Mr. and Mrs. Morgan, a post of danger assuredly not sought for with any heroic intrepidity, while an equally eager intrigue was on foot about securing the presence of the young Marquis of Agincourt and his tutor, Mr. Layton. The ballot, however, routed all previous machinations, deciding that the young Peer was to travel with the Morgans and Colonel Quackinboss, an announcement

which no deference to the parties themselves could prevent being received with a blank disappointment, except by Mr. Layton, who simply said,

"We shall take care to be in time, Mrs. Morgan." And then, drawing his pupil's arm within his own, strolled negligently away.

CHAPTER IV.

Visitors.

"I FORETOLD all this," said Charles Heathcote, peevishly, as a servant presented a number of visiting-cards with a polite request from the owners to be allowed to visit the Villa and its gardens. "I often warned you of the infliction of inhabiting one of these celebrated places, which our inquisitive countrymen *will* see and their wives *will* write about."

"Who are they, Charley?" said May, gaily. "Let us see if we may not know some of them."

"Know them. Heaven forbid! Look at the equipages they have come in, only cast an eye at the two leathern conveniences now before the door, and say, is it likely that they contain any acquaintances of ours?"

"How hot they look, broiling down there! But who are they, Charley?"

"Mrs. Penthony Morris — never heard of her; Mr. Algernon Mosely — possibly the Bond-street man; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Rice Morgan, of Plwmnwrar, however that be pronounced; Mr. Layton and friend — discreet friend, who will not figure by name; Mr. Gorman O'Shea, by all the powers! and, as I live, our Yankee again!"

"Not Quackinboss, surely?" broke in Sir William, good-humouredly.

"Yes. There he is: 'U. S. A., Colonel Leonidas Shaver Quackinboss;' and there's the man, too, with his coat on his arm, on that coach-box."

"I'll certainly vote for my Transatlantic friend," said the Baronet, "and consequently for any party of which he is a member."

"As for me!" cried May — "I've quite a curiosity to see him; not to say that it would be downright churlishness to refuse any of our countrymen the permission thus asked for."

"Be it so. I only stipulate for not playing Cicerone to our amiable visitors; and the more surely to escape such an indignity, I'm off till dinner."

"Let Fenton wait on those gentlemen," said the Baronet, "and go round with them through the house and the grounds. Order luncheon also to be ready." There was a little, a very little, irritation, perhaps, in his voice, but May's pleasant smile quickly dispelled the momentary chagrin, and his good-humoured face was soon itself again.

If I have not trespassed upon my reader's patience by minute descriptions of the characters I have introduced to him, it is in the expectation that their traits are such as, lying lightly on the surface, require little elucidation. Nor do I ask of him to bestow more attention to their features than he would upon those of travelling acquaintances with whom it is his fortune to journey in company for a brief space.

Strange enough, indeed, is that intimacy of travelling acquaintanceship! familiar, without friendship — frank, without being cordial. Curious pictures of life might be

made from these groups thrown accidentally together in a steam-boat, or railroad, at the gay watering-place, or the little fishing-village in the bathing season.

How free is all the intercourse of those who seem to have taken a vow with themselves never to meet each other again! with what humorous zest do they enjoy the oddities of this one, or the eccentricities of that, making up little knots and cliques, to be changed or dissolved within the day, and actually living on the eventualities of the hour, for their confidences! The contrasts that would repel in ordinary life, the disparities that would discourage, have actually invited intimacy; and people agree to associate, even familiarly, with those whom, in the recognised order of their daily existence, they would have as coldly repelled.

There was little to bind those together whom we have represented as seated under the chesnut-trees at the Bagni de Lucca. They entertained their suspicions, and distrusts, and misgivings of each other to a liberal extent; they wasted no charities in their estimate of each other; and, wherever posed by a difficulty, they did not lend to the interpretation any undue amount of generosity; nay, they even went further, and argued, from little peculiarities of dress, manner, and demeanour, to the whole antecedents of him they criticised, and took especial pains in their moments of confidence to declare that they had only met Mr. — for the first time at Ems, and never saw Mrs. — “till they were overtaken by the snow-storm on the Splügen.”

Such-like was the company who now, headed by the obsequious butler, strolled leisurely through the spacious saloons of the Villa Caprini.

Who is there, in this era of universal vagabondage,

has not made one of such groups? Where is the man that has not strolled, "John Murray" in hand, along his Dresden, his Venice, or his Rome! staring at ceilings, and gazing ruefully at time-discoloured frescoes — grieved to acknowledge to his own heart how little he could catch of a connoisseur's enthusiasm, or an antiquarian's fervour — wondering within himself wherefore he could not feel like that other man, whose raptures he was reading, and with sore misgivings that some nice sense had been omitted in his nature. Wonderfully poignant and painful things are these little appeals to an inner consciousness. How far such sentiments were distributed amongst those who now lounged and stared through salon and gallery, we must leave to the reader's own appreciation. They looked pleased, convinced, and astonished, and, be it confessed, "bored" in turn; they were called upon to admire much they did not care for, and wonder at many things which did not astonish them; they were often referred to histories which they had forgotten, if they ever knew them, and to names of whose celebrity they were ignorant; and it was with a most honest sense of relief they saw themselves reach the last room of the suite, where a few cabinet pictures and some rare carvings in ivory alone claimed their attention.

"A 'Virgin and Child,' by Murillo," said the guide.

"The ninth 'Virgin and Child,' by all that's holy!" said Mr. O'Shea. "The ninth we have seen to-day!"

"The blue drapery, ladies and gentlemen," continued the inexorable describer, "is particularly noticed. It is 'glazed' in a manner only known to Murillo."

"I'm glad of it, and I hope the secret died with

him," cried Mr. Morgan. "It looks for all the world like a bathing-dress."

"The child squints. Don't he squint?" exclaimed Mosely.

"Oh, for shame!" cried Mrs. Morris. "Mr. Layton is quite shocked with your profane criticism."

"I did not hear it, I assure you," said that gentleman, as he arose from a long and close contemplation of a "St. John," by Salvator.

"St. John preaching in the Wilderness!" said Quackinboss; "too tame for my taste. He don't seem to roll up his sleeves to the work — does he?"

"It's not stump-oratory, surely?" said Layton, with a quiet smile.

"Ain't it, though! Well, stranger, I'm in a considerable unmixed error if it is not! You'd like to maintain that because a man doesn't rise up from a velvet cushion and lay his hand upon a grand railing, all carved with grotesque intricacies, all his sentiments must needs be common-place and vulgar; but I'm here to tell you, Sir, that you'd hear grander things, nobler things and greater things, from a moss-covered old tree-stump in a western pine-forest, by the mouth of a plain, hardy son of hard toil, than you've often listened to in what you call your place in Parliament. Now that's a fact!"

There was that amount of energy in the way these words were uttered that seemed to say, if carried further, the discussion might become contentious.

Mr. Layton did not show any disposition to accept the gage of battle, but turned to seek for his pupil.

"You're looking for the Marquis, Mr. Layton," asked Mrs. Morris, "ain't you? I think you'll find him in the shrubberies, for he said all this only bored him,

and he'd go and look for a cool spot to smoke his cigar."

"That's what it all comes to," said Morgan, as soon as Layton had left the room; "that's the whole of it! You pay a fellow — a 'double first' something or other from Oxford or Cambridge — five hundred a year to go abroad with your son, and all he teaches him is to choose a cheroot."

"And smoke it, Tom," chimed in Mrs. Morgan.

"There ain't no harm in a weed, Sir, I hope?" said Quackinboss. "The thinkers of this earth are most of 'em smoking men. What do you say, Sir, to Humboldt, Niebuhr, your own Bulwer, and all our people, from John C. Colhoun to Daniel Webster. When a man puts a cigar between his lips, he as good as says, 'I'm a reflecting — I'm not in no ways to be broke in upon.' It's his own fault, Sir, if he doesn't think, for he has in a manner shut the door to keep out intruders."

"Filthy custom!" muttered Mr. Morgan, with a garbled sentence, in which the word "America" was half audible.

"What's this he's saying about eating — this Italian fellow?" said Mr. Mosely, as a servant addressed him in a foreign language.

"It is a polite invitation to a luncheon," said Mrs. Morris, modestly turning to her fellow-travellers for their decision.

"Do any of us know our host?" asked Mr. O'Shea. "He is a Sir William Heathcote."

"There was a director of the Central Trunk Line of that name, who failed for half a million sterling," whispered Morgan; "shouldn't wonder if it were he."

"All the more certain to give us a jolly feed, if he be!" chuckled Mosely. "I vote we accept."

"That of course," said Mrs. Morris.

"Well, I know him. I reckon," drawled out Quackinboss, "and I rayther suspect you owe this here politeness to *my* company. Yes, Sir!" said he, half fiercely, to O'Shea, upon whose face a sort of incredulous smile was breaking — "yes, Sir!"

"Being our own countryman, Sir — an Englishman — I suspect," said Mr. Morgan, with warmth, "that the hospitality has been extended to us on wider grounds."

"But why should we dispute about the matter at all," mildly remarked Mrs. Morris. "Let us say yes, and be grateful."

"There's good sense in that," chimed in Mosely, "and I second it."

"Carried with unanimity," said O'Shea, as, turning to the servant, he muttered something in broken French.

"Well, I'm sure, I never!" mumbled Quackinboss to himself; but what he meant, or to what new circumstance in his life's experience he alluded, there is unhappily no explanation in this history; but he followed the rest with a drooping head and an air of half melancholy resignation that was not by any means unusual with him.

CHAPTER V.

Accidents and their Consequences.

WHEN the young Marquis had made his escape from sight-seeing, and all its attendant inflictions, he was mainly bent on what he would himself have called being "very jolly" — that is to say, going his own way unmolested, strolling the road he fancied, and following out his own thoughts. Not that these same thoughts absolutely needed for their exercise or development any extraordinary advantages of solitude and retirement. He was no deep-minded sage, revolving worlds to come — no poet, in search of the inspiring influence of nature — no subtle politician, balancing the good and evil of some nice legislation. He was simply one of those many thousand England yearly turns out from her public schools of fine, dashing, free-hearted, careless boys, whose most marked feature in character is a wholesome horror of all that is mean or shabby. Less than a year before he had been a midshipman in her Majesty's gun-boat *Mosquito*; the death of an elder brother had made him a Marquis, with the future prospect of several thousands a year.

He had scarcely seen or known his brother, so he grieved very little for his loss, but he sorrowed sincerely over the change of fortune that called him from his sea life and companions to an "on-shore" existence, and instead of the gun-room and its gay guests, gave him the proprieties of station and the requirements of high rank. One of his guardians thought he ought to go into the Guards; another, advised a university; both agreed upon a tutor, and Mr. Layton was found, a

young man of small fortune, whose health, injured by over-reading for honours, required change of scene and rest. They had been companions for a very short time, but had, as the young lord would have said, "hit it off" admirably together; that is to say, partly from a just appreciation of his pupil, and partly out of a natural indolence of disposition, Layton interfered very little with him, gave him no troublesome tasks, imposed no actual studies, but contented himself with a careful watch over the boy's disposition, a gentle, scarce perceptible, correction of his faults, and an honest zeal to develop any generous trait in his nature, little mindful of the disappointments his trustfulness must incur. Layton's theory was that we all become wise too early in life, and that the world's lessons should not be too soon implanted in a fresh, unsuspecting nature. His system was not destined to be sorely tested in the present case. Harry Montserrat, Marquis of Agincourt, was a fortunate subject to illustrate it by. There never was a less suspectful nature; he was frank, generous, and brave; his faults were those of a hot, fiery temper, and a disposition to resent, too early and too far, what with a little patience he might have tolerated or even forgiven.

The fault, however, which Layton was more particularly guardful against, was a certain over-consciousness of his station and its power, which gradually began to show itself.

In his first experience of altered fortune he did nothing but regret the past. It was no compensation to him for his careless sea life, with all its pleasant associations, to become of a sudden invested with station, and treated with what he deemed over-deference. His reefer's jacket

was pleasanter "wear" than his padded frock-coat; the nimble boy who waited on him in the gun-room he thought a far smarter attendant than his obsequious valet; and, with all his midshipman's love of money-spending and squandering, the charm of extravagance was gone when there were no messmates to partake of it; nor did his well groomed nag, and his well-dressed tiger, suggest one-half the enjoyment he had often felt in a pony ride over the cliffs of Malta, with some others of his mess, where falls were rife and tumbles frequent. These, I say, were first thoughts, but gradually others took their places. The enervation of a life of ease began soon to show itself, and he felt the power of a certain station. In the allowance his guardian made him, he had a far greater sum at his disposal than he ever possessed before; and in the title of his rank he soon discovered a magic that made the world beneath him very deferential and very obliging.

"That boy has been very ill brought up, Mr. Layton; it will be your chief care to instil into him proper notions of the place he is to occupy one of these days," said an old Earl, one of his guardians, and who was most eager that every trace of his sea life should be eradicated.

"Don't let him get spoiled, Layton, because he's a Lord," said the other guardian, who was an old Admiral. "There's good stuff in the lad, and it would be a thousand pities it should be corrupted."

Layton did his best to obey each; but the task had its difficulties. As to the boy himself, the past and the present, the good and the evil, the frank young midddy and the rich lordling, warred and con-

tended in his nature; nor was it very certain at any moment which would ultimately gain the mastery. Such, without dwelling more minutely, was he who now strolled along through shrubbery and parterre, half listless as to the way, but very happy withal, and very light-hearted.

There was something in the scene that recalled England to his mind. There were more trees and turf than usually are found in Italian landscape, and there was, half hidden between hazel and alder, a clear, bright river, that brawled and fretted over rocks, or deepened into dark pools, alternately. How the circling eddies of a fast-flowing stream do appeal to young hearts! what music do they hear in the gushing waters! what a story is there in that silvery current as it courses along through waving meadows, or beneath tall mountains, and along some dark and narrow gorge, emblem of life itself in its light and shade, its peaceful intervals and its hours of struggle and conflict!

Forcing his way through the brushwood that guarded the banks, the boy gained a little ledge of rock, against which the current swept with violence, and then careered onward over a shallow, gravelly bed till lost in another bend of the stream. Just as Agincourt reached the rock he spied! a fishing-rod deeply and securely fastened in one of its fissures, but whose taper point was now bending like a whip, and springing violently under the struggling efforts of a strong fish. He was nothing of an angler. Of honest "Izaak" and his gentle craft he absolutely knew nought, and of all the mysteries of hackles and green drakes he was utterly ignorant; but his sailor instinct could tell him when a spar was about to break, and this he now saw to be the case. The

strain was great, and every jerk now threatened to snap either line or rod. He looked hurriedly around him for the fisherman, whose interests were in such grave peril; but seeing no one near, he endeavoured to withdraw the rod. While he thus struggled, for it was fastened with care, the efforts of the fish to escape became more and more violent, and at last, just as the boy had succeeded in his task, a strong spring from the fish snapped the rod near the tip, and at the same instant snatched it from the youth's hand into the stream. Without a second's hesitation, Agincourt dashed into the river, which rose nearly to his shoulders, and, after a vigorous pursuit, reached the rod, but only as the fish had broken the strong gut in two, and made his escape up the rapid current.

The boy was toilfully clambering up the bank, with the broken rod in his hand, when a somewhat angry summons in Italian met his ears. It was time enough, he thought, to look for the speaker when he had gained dry land, so he patiently fought his way upwards, and at last, out of breath and exhausted, threw himself full length in the deep grass of the bank.

"I believe I am indebted to you, Sir, for my smashed tackle and the loss of a heavy fish besides?" said Charles Heathcote, as he came up to where the youth was lying, his voice and manner indicating the anger that moved him.

"I thought to have saved the rod and caught the fish too," said the other, half-indolently; "but I only got a wet jacket for my pains."

"I rather suspect, young gentleman, you are more conversant with a measuring-yard than a salmon-rod,"

said Heathcote, insolently, as he surveyed the damaged fragments of his tackle.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" cried the boy, springing with a bound to his feet, and advancing boldly towards his adversary.

"Simply that it's not exactly the sort of sport you follow in Bondstreet," retorted Heathcote, whose head was full of "Mosely and Trip," and felt certain that a scion of that great house was before him.

"You must be a rare snob not to know a gentleman when you see him," said Agincourt, with an insolent defiance in his look.

"Perhaps I'd be a better judge if I saw him after a good washing," said Heathcote, who, with one hasty glance at the river, now turned a fierce eye on the youth.

Agincourt's gun-room experiences had not taught him to decline an offered battle, and he threw off his cap to show that he was ready and willing to accept the challenge, when suddenly Layton sprang between them, crying out, "What's the meaning of all this?"

"The meaning is, that your young friend there has taken the liberty, first, to smash my fishing gear, and then to be very insolent to me, and that I had very serious intentions of sending him to look for the one and pay forfeit for the other."

"Yes, I broke his rod, and I'll pay for it, or, if he's a gentleman, I'll beg his pardon, or fight him," said the boy, in a tone of ill-repressed anger.

"When there is an evident mistake somewhere," said Layton, gently, "it only needs a moment of forbearance to set it right."

"Here's how it all happened," broke in the boy,

eagerly. And in a few words he related his chance arrival at the spot, how he had seen the rod in what he deemed imminent danger, and how, with the best intentions, he had interfered to save it.

"I beg you to accept all my excuses for what I have said to you," said Heathcote, with a frank and manly courtesy. "I am quite ashamed of my ill-temper, and hope you'll forgive it."

"To be sure I will. But what about the rod — you can't easily get such another in these parts?"

The boy looked eagerly at Layton as he spoke. Layton as quickly gave an admonitory glance of caution, and the youth's instinctive good breeding understood it.

"I think you came over with a party of friends to see the Villa," said Heathcote, to relieve the awkward pause between them.

"Not friends, exactly; people of our hotel."

Heathcote smiled faintly, and rejoined:

"Some of our pleasantest acquaintances come of chance intimacies — don't you think so?"

"Oh, for the matter of that, they're jolly enough. There's a wonderful Londoner, and a rare Yankee, and there's an Irishman would make the fortune of the Haymarket."

"You must own, Harry, they are all most kind and good-natured to you," said Layton, in a tone of mild half-rebuke.

"Well, ain't I just as — what shall I call it? — polite and the like to them? Ay, Layton, frown away as much as you like, they're a rum lot."

"It is young gentlemen of this age who, now-a-days, are most severe on the manners and habits of

those they chance upon in a journey, not at all aware that, as the world is all new to them, their criticism may have for its object things of every-day frequency."

The youth looked somewhat vexed at this reproof, but said nothing.

"I have the same unlucky habit myself," said Heathcote, good-humouredly. "I pronounce upon people with wonderfully little knowledge of them, and no great experience of the world neither; and — case in point — your American acquaintance is exactly one of those I feel the very strongest antipathy to. We have met at least a dozen times during the winter and autumn, and the very thought of finding *him* in a place, would decide *me* to leave it."

It was not Layton's business to correct what he deemed faulty in this sentiment, but in the sharp glance he threw towards his pupil, he seemed to convey his disapproval of it.

"'My Coach,' Mr. Layton, is dying to tell us both we are wrong, Sir," said the boy; "he likes the 'kernal.'" And this he said with a nasal twang whose imitation was not to be mistaken.

Though Heathcote laughed at the boy's mimicry, his attention was more taken by the expression "my Coach," which not only revealed the relations of tutor and pupil between them, but showed, by its familiarity, that the youth stood in no great awe of his preceptor.

Perhaps Layton had no fancy for this liberty before a stranger; perhaps he felt ashamed of the position itself; perhaps he caught something in Heathcote's quick glance towards him — whatever it was, he was irritated

and provoked, and angrily bit his lip, without uttering a word.

"Oh, here come the sight-seers! they are doing the grounds, and the grottoes, and the marble fountains," cried the boy, as a large group came out from a flower-garden and took their way towards an orangery. As they issued forth, however, Mrs. Morris stopped to caress a very large St. Bernard dog, who lay chained at the foot of an oak-tree. Charles Heathcote had not time to warn her of her danger, when the animal sprang fiercely at her. Had she not fallen suddenly backward, she must have been fearfully mangled; as it was, she received a severe wound in the wrist, and, overcome by pain and terror together, sank fainting on the sward.

For some time the confusion was extreme. Some thought that the dog was at liberty and fled away in terror across the park; others averred that he was — must be — mad, and his bite fatal; a few tried to be useful; but Quackinboss hurried to the river, and, filling his hat with water, sprinkled the cold face of the sufferer and washed the wound, carefully binding it up with his handkerchief in a quick business-like way, that showed he was not new to such casualties.

Layton, meanwhile, took charge of the little girl, whose cries and screams were heart-rending.

"What a regular day of misfortunes, this!" said Agincourt, as he followed the mournful procession while they carried the still fainting figure back to the house. "I fancy you'll not let another batch of sight-seers into your grounds in a hurry."

"The ill-luck has all befallen our guests," said

Heathcote. "Our share of the mishap is to be associated with so much calamity."

All that care and kindness could provide waited on Mrs. Morris, as she was carried into the Villa and laid on a bed. May Leslie took all upon herself, and, while the doctor was sent for, used such remedies as she had near. It was at once decided that she should not be removed, and after some delay the company departed without her; the day that had dawned so pleasantly thus closing in gloom and sadness, and the party so bent on amusement returning homeward depressed and dispirited.

"They're mean vicious, these Alp dogs, and never to be trusted," said Quackinboss.

"Heroines will be heroines," said Mrs. Morgan, gruffly.

"Or rather won't be heroines when the occasion comes for it. She fainted off like a school-girl," growled out Morgan.

"I should think she did!" muttered Mosely, "when she felt the beast's teeth in her."

"A regular day of misfortunes!" repeated Agincourt.

"And we lost the elegant fine luncheon, too, into the bargain," said O'Shea. "Every one seemed to think it wouldn't be genteel to eat after the disaster."

"It is the fate of pleasure parties," said Layton, moodily. And so they jogged on in silence.

And thus ended a day of pleasure, as many have ended before it.

Assuredly, they who plan pic-nics are not animated by the spirit of an actuary. There is a marvellous lack

of calculation in their composition, since, of all species of entertainment, there exists not one so much at the mercy of accident, so thoroughly dependent for success on everything going right. Like the Walcheren expedition, the "wind must not only blow from the right point, but with a certain graduated amount of force." What elements of sunshine and shade — what combinations of good spirits, and good temper, and good taste — what guidance, and what moderation — what genius of direction, and what "respect for minorities!" We will not enter upon the material sources of success, though, indeed, it should be owned they are generally better looked to, and more cared for, than the moral ingredients thus massed and commingled.

It was late when the party reached the Bagni, and wishing each other a half-cold good night, separated.

And now, one last peep at the Villa, where we have left the sufferer. It was not until evening that the Heathcotes had so far recovered from the shock of the morning's disaster, and its consequences, as to be able to meet and talk over the events, and the actors in them.

"Well," said Sir William, as they all sat round the tea-table, "what do you say to my Yankee, now? Of all that company, was there one that showed the same readiness in a difficulty, a quickwitted aptitude to do the right thing, and at the same time so unobtrusively and quietly, that when everything was over it was hard to say who had done it?"

"*I call him charming. I'm in ecstasies with him,*" said May, whose exaggerations of praise or censure were usually unbounded.

"I'm quite ready to own he 'came out' strong in the confusion," said Charles, half unwillingly; "but it was just the sort of incident that such a man was sure to figure well in."

"Show me the man who is active and ready-minded in his benevolence, and I'll show you one who has not to go far into his heart to search for generous motives. I maintain it, Quackinboss is a fine fellow!" There was almost a touch of anger in Sir William's voice as he said these words, as though he would regard any disparagement of the American as an offence to himself.

"I think Charley is a little jealous," said May, with a sly malice; "he evidently wanted to carry the wounded lady himself, when that great giant interposed, and, seizing the prize, walked away as though he were only carrying a baby."

"*I* fancied it was the tutor was disappointed," said Charles; "and the way he devoted his cares to the little girl, when deprived of the mamma, convinced me he was the party chiefly interested."

"Which was the tutor?" asked May, hastily. "You don't mean the man with all the velvet on his coat?"

"No, no; that was Mr. O'Shea, the Irish M.P., who, by the way, paid *you* the most persevering attention."

"A hateful creature, insufferably pretentious and impertinent. The tutor was, then, the pale young man in black?"

"A nice, modest fellow," broke in Sir William; "and a fine boy that young Marquis of Agincourt. I'm glad you asked him up here, Charles. He is to come on Tuesday, is he not?"

"Yes, I said Tuesday, because I can't get my tackle to rights before that; and I promised to make him a fly-fisher. I owe him the reparation."

"You included the tutor, of course, in your invitation?" asked his father.

"No. How stupid! I forgot him altogether."

"Oh! that was too bad," said May.

"Indeed!" cried Charles, turning towards her with a look of such malicious significance that she blushed deeply, and averted her head.

"Let us invite them all up here for Tuesday, May," said Sir William. "It would be very unfair if they were to carry away only a disagreeable memory of this visit. Let us try and efface the first unhappy impression."

"All right," said Charles, "and I'll dash off a few lines to Mr. Layton, I think his name is, to say that we expect he will favour us with his company for a few days here. Am I not generosity itself, May?" said he, in a low whisper, as he passed behind her chair.

A blush still deeper than the first, and a look of offended pride, were her only answer.

"I must go in search of these good people's cards, for I forget some of their names," said Charles; "though I believe I remember the important ones."

This last sally was again directed towards May, but she, apparently, did not hear it.

"Who knows but your patient up-stairs may be well enough to meet her friends, May?" said Sir William.

"Perhaps so. I can't tell," answered she, vaguely; for she had but heard him imperfectly, and scarcely knew what she was replying.

CHAPTER VI.

The Member for Inchabogue.

MR. O'SHEA lay in his bed at the Bagni di Lucca. It was late of the afternoon, and he had not yet risen, being one of those who deem, to travesty the poet,

That the best of all ways,
To shorten our days,
Is to add a few hours to the night, my dear.

In other words, he was ineffably bored and wearied, sick of the place, the people, and himself, and only wearing over the time as one might do the stated term of an imprisonment. His agent — Mr. Mahony, the celebrated Mr. Miles Mahony, who was agent for all the Irish gentlemen of Mr. O'Shea's politics, and who had either estates very much encumbered, or, no estates at all — had written him that letter, which might be stereotyped in every agent's office, and sent off indiscriminately by post, at due intervals, to any of the clients, for there was the same bead-roll of mishaps and calamities Ireland has been suffering under for centuries. Take any traveller or guide-book experience of the land, and it is a record of rain that never ceased. The Deluge was a passing April shower compared to the national climate. Ask any proprietor, however, more especially if a farmer, and he would tell you, "We're ruined, entirely ruined, with the drought" — perhaps he'd have called it "druth." "If the rain doesn't fall before twenty-four hours, there will be no potatoes, no grass, no straw, the wheat won't fill, the cattle will be destroyed," and so on; just as if the whole population was not soaked

through like a wet sponge, and the earth a sludge of mud and swamp, to which Holland seemed a sand-bank in comparison! Then came the run-away tenants, only varied by those who couldn't be induced to "run," on any terms. There was the usual "agrarian outrage," with the increased police force quartered on the barony in consequence, and perhaps a threat of a special commission, with more expense besides. There was the extract of the judge's charge, saying that he never remembered so "heavy a calendar," the whole winding up with an urgent appeal to send over ten or twenty pounds to repair the chapel, or the priest's house, or contribute to some local object, "at your indifference to which there is very great discontent at this moment."

A pleasant postscript also mentioned that a dissolution of Parliament was daily expected, and that it would be well you'd "come home and look after the borough, where the Tories were working night and day to increase their influence."

"Bad luck to them for Tories!" muttered he, as he threw the crumpled document from him. "I'd have been well off to-day if it wasn't for them. There's no telling the money the contested elections cost me, while, to make out that I was a patriot, I couldn't take a place, but had to go on voting and voting out of the purity of my motives. It was an evil hour when I took to politics at all. Joe! Joe!" cried he aloud, following up the appeal with a shrill whistle.

"Tear and ages, sure the house isn't on fire!" said a man, rushing into the room with an air and manner that little indicated the respect due from a servant to his master; "not to say," added he, "that

it's not dacent or becomin' to whistle after me, as if I was a tarrier or a bull-dog."

"Hold your prate, will you?" said Mr. O'Shea.

"Why would I? 'Tis humiliated I am before all in the place."

"Will you hold your prate?" muttered his master, in a deeper tone, while, stretching forth his hand, he seemed in search of any missive to hurl at his mutinous follower.

"If I do, then, it's undher protest, mind that. I put it on record that I'm only yieldin' to the 'vis magiory.'"

"What o'clock is it?" yawned out O'Shea.

"It wants a trifle of four o'clock."

"And the day — what's it like?"

"Blazin' hot — hotter than yesterday — 'hotter than New Orleens," Mr. Quackinbosh says."

"D — n Mr. Quackinbosh, and New Orleēns too!" growled out O'Shea.

"With all my heart. He's always laughing at what he calls *my* Irish, as if it wasn't better than *his* English!"

"Any strangers arrived?"

"Devil a one. Ould Pagnini says he'll be ruined entirely — there never was such a set, he says, in the house before — nothing called for but the reg'lar meals, and no wine but the drink of the country, that isn't wine at all."

"He's an insolent scoundrel!"

"He is not. He is the dacentest man I seen, since I come to Italy."

"Will you hold your prate, or do you want me to kick you down stairs?"

"I do not!" said he, with a stern doggedness that was almost comic.

"Did you order breakfast?"

"I did, when I heard you screech out. 'There he is,' says ould Pan; 'I wish he'd be in the same hurry to call for his bill.'"

"Insolent rascal! Did you blacken his eye?"

"I did not."

"What did you do, then?"

"I did nothing."

"What did you say? — you're ready enough with a bad tongue when it's not called for — what did you say?"

"I said people called for their bills when they were lavin' a house, and too lucky you'll be, says I, if he pays it when he calls for it."

This seemed too much for Mr. O'Shea's endurance, for he sprang out of bed and hurled a heavy old olive-wood inkstand at his follower. Joe, apparently habituated to such projectiles, speedily ducked his head, and the missive struck the frame of an old looking-glass, and carried away a much-ornamented but very frail chandelier at its side.

"There's more of it," said Joe. "Damage to furniture in settin'-room, forty-six pauls and a half." With this sage reflection he pushed the fragments aside with his foot, and then, turning to the door, he took from the hands of a waiter the tray containing his master's breakfast, arranging it deliberately before him with the most unbroken tranquillity of demeanour.

"Didn't you say it was chocolate I'd have instead of coffee?" said O'Shea, angrily.

"I did not; they grumble enough about sending up anything, and I wasn't goin' to provoke them," said Joe, calmly.

"No letters, I suppose, but this?"

"Sorra one."

"What's going on below?" asked he, in a more lively tone, as though dismissing an unpleasant theme. Any one come — anything doing?"

"Nothing; they're all off to that Villa to spend the day, and not to be back till late at night."

"Stupid fun, after all; the road is roasting, and the place, when you get there, not worth the trouble; but they're so proud of visiting a baronet, that's the whole secret of it, those vulgar Morgans and that Yankee fellow."

These mutterings he continued while he went on dressing, and though not intended to be addressed to Joe, he was in no wise disconcerted when that free-and-easy individual replied to them.

"Your master's not coming with us, I believe," said Mrs. Morgan to me. 'I'm sure, however, there must have been a mistake. It's so strange that he got no invitation.'

"But he did, ma'am," says I; 'he got a card like the rest.'"

"Well done, Joe; a lie never choked you. Go on," cried O'Shea, laughing.

"But you see, ma'am," says I, 'my master never goes anywhere in that kind of promiscuous way. He expects to be called on and treated with 'difference,' as becomes a member of Parliament —'

"For Ireland?" says she.

"Yes, ma'am," says I. 'We haven't as many

goats there as in other parts I'm tould of, nor the females don't ride straddle legs, with men's hats on thim.'"

"You didn't say that?" burst in O'Shea, with a mock severity.

"I did, and more — a great deal more. What business was it of hers that you were not asked to the the pic-nic? What had she to say to it? Why did she follow me down the street the other morning, and stay watching all the time I was in at the banker's, and though, when I came out, I made believe I was stuffin' the bank-notes into my pocket, I saw by the impudent laugh on her face that she knew I got nothing?"

"By the way, you never told me what Twist and Trover said."

"I did."

"Well, what was it? Tell it again," said O'Shea, angrily.

"Mr. Trover said, 'Of course, whatever your master wants, just step in there and show it to Mr. Twist;' and Mr. Twist said, 'Are you here again,' says he, 'after the warnin' I gave you? Go back and tell your master 'tis takin' up his two last bills he ought to be, instead of passin more.'

"'Mr. Trover, Sir,' says I, 'sent me in.'

"'Well, Mr. Twist sent you out again,' says he, 'and there's your answer.'

"'Short and sweet,' says I, goin' out, and pretending to be putting up the notes as I went."

"Did you go down to the other fellow's — Mac-apes?"

"I did; but as he seen me coming out of the other

place, he only ballyragged me, and said, 'We only discount for them as has letters of credit on us.'

"'Well,' says I, 'but who knows that they're not coming in the post now?'

"'We'll wait till we see them,' says he.

"'By my conscience,' says I, 'I hope you'll not eat your breakfast till they come.' And so I walked away. Oh dear! isn't it a suspicious world?"

"It's a rascally world!" broke out O'Shea, with bitterness.

"It is!" assented Joe, with a positive energy there was no gainsaying.

"Is Mr. Layton gone with the rest this morning?"

"He is, and the Marquis. They're a horseback on two ponies not worth fifty shilling apiece."

"And that counter-jumper Mosely, I'll wager he, too, thinks himself first favourite for the heiress."

"Well, then, in the name of all that's lucky, why don't you thry your own chance?" said Joe, coaxingly.

"Isn't it because I *did* try that they have left me out of this invitation? Isn't it because they saw I was like to be the winning horse that they scratched me out of the race? Isn't it just because Gorman O'Shea was the man to carry off the prize that they wouldn't let me enter the lists?"

"There's only two more as rich as her in all England," chimed in Joe, "and one of them will never marry any but the Emperor of Roosia."

"She has money enough!" muttered O'Shea.

"And neither father nor mother, brother, sister, kith or kin," continued Joe, in a tone of exultation that seemed to say he knew of no such good luck in life as to stand alone and friendless in the world.

"Those Heathcotes are related to her."

"No more than they are to you. I have it all from Miss Smithers, the maid. 'We're as free as air, Mr. Rouse,' says she; 'wherever we have a "conceit," we can follow it.' That's plain talking, anyhow."

"Would you marry Smithers, Joe?" said his master, with a roguish twinkle in his eye.

"Maybe, if I knew for what; though, by my conscience, she's no beauty!"

"I meant, of course, for a good consideration."

"Not on a bill, though — money down — hard money."

"And how much of it?" asked O'Shea, with a knowing look.

"The price of that place at Kinsale."

"The 'Trout and Triangle,' Joe?" laughed out his master. "Are you still yearning after being an inn-keeper in your native town?"

"I am just that," replied Joe, solemnly. "'Tis what I'd rather be than Lord Mayor of Dublin!"

"Well, it is an honourable ambition, no doubt of it. Nothing can be more reasonable, besides, than a man's desire to fill that station in life which, to his boyish ideas, seemed high and enviable." This speech Mr. O'Shea delivered in a tone by which he occasionally turned to rehearse oratorical effects, and which, by some strange sympathy, always appeared to please his follower. "Yes Joe," continued he "as the poet says, 'The child is father of the man.'"

"You mane the man is father of the child," broke in Joe.

"I do not, booby; I meant what I have said, and what Wordsworth said before me."

"The more fool he, then. It's nobody's father he'd be. Arrah! that's the way you always spoil a fine sintiment with something out of a poet. Poets and play-actors never helped a man out of a ditch!"

"Will you marry this Smithers, if that be her name?" said O'Shea, angrily.

"For the place —"

"I mean as much."

"I would, if I was treated — 'raysonable,'" said he, pausing for a moment in search of the precise word he wanted.

Mr. O'Shea sighed heavily; his exchequer contained nothing but promises; and none knew better than his follower what such pledges were worth.

"It would be the making of *you*, Joe," said he, after a brief silence, "if I was to marry this heiress."

"Indeed it might be," responded the other.

"It would be the grand event of *your* life, that's what it would be. What could I not do for you? You might be land-steward — you might be under-agent, bailiff, driver — eh?"

"Yes," said Joe, closing his eyes, as if he desired to relish the vision undisturbed by external distractions.

"I have always treated you as a sort of friend, Joe — you know that."

"I do, Sir. I do, indeed."

"And I mean to prove myself your friend, too. It is not the man who has stuck faithfully by me that I'd desert. Where's my dressing-gown?"

"She was torn under the arm, and I gave her to be mended; put this round you," said he, draping a much befrogged pelisse over his master's shoulders.

"These are not my slippers, you stupid ass."

"They are the ould ones. Don't you remember shying one of the others, yesterday, at the organ-boy, and it fell in the river and was lost?"

Mr. M'Shea's brow darkened as he sat down to his meal. "Tell Pan," said he, "to send me up some broth and a chop about seven. I must keep the house to-day, and be indisposed. And do you go over to Lucca, and raise me a few Naps on my 'rose-amethyst' ring. Three will do — five would be better, though."

Joe sighed. It was a mission he had so often been charged with and never came well out of, since his master would invariably insist on hearing every step of the negotiation, and as unfailingly revenged upon his envoy all the impertinences to which the treaty gave rise.

"Don't come back with any insolent balderdash about the stone being false, or having a flaw in it. Holditch values it at two hundred and thirty pounds; and, if it wasn't a family ring, I'd have taken the money. And mind you don't be talking about whose it is — it's a gentleman waiting for his letters —"

"Sure I know," burst in Joe; "his remittances, that ought to be here every day."

"Just so: and that merely requires a few Naps —"

"To pay his cigars —"

"There's no need of more explanation. Away with you; and tell Bruno I'll want a saddle-horse to-morrow, to be here at the door by two o'clock."

Joe took his departure, and Mr. O'Shea was left to his own meditations.

It may seem a small cause for depression of spirit, but, in truth, it was always a day of deep humiliation

to Mr. O'Shea when his necessities compelled him to separate himself from that cherished relic, his great-grandmother's ring. It had been reserved in his family, as a sort of charm, for generations; his grand-uncle Luke had married on the strength of it; his own father had flashed it in the eyes of Bath and Cheltenham, for many a winter, with great success; and he himself had so significantly pointed out incorrect items in his hotel bills, with the forefinger that bore it, that landlords had never pressed for payment, but gone away heart-full of the man who owned such splendour.

It would be a curious subject to inquire how many men have owed their distinction or success in life to some small adjunct, some adventitious appendage of this kind; a horse, a picture, a rare bronze, a statue, a curious manuscript, a fragment of old armour, have made their owners famous, when they have had the craft to merge their identity in the more absorbing interest of the wondrous treasure. And thus, the man that owns the winner of the Derby, a great cup carved by Cellini, or a chef-d'œuvre of Claude or Turner, may repose upon the fame of his possession, identified as he is with so much greatness. Oh! ye possessors of show places, handsome wives, rare gardens, or costly gems, in what borrowed bravery do ye meet the world! Not that in this happy category Mr. O'Shea had his niche; no, he was only the owner of a ring — a rose-amethyst ring — whose purity was perhaps not more above suspicion than his own. And yet it had done him marvellous service on more than one occasion. It had astonished the bathers at St. Leonard, and dazzled the dinner company at Tunbridge Wells; Harrogate had winked under it, and Malvern gazed at it with awe;

and society, so to say, was divided into those who knew the man from the ring, and those who knew the ring from the man.

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Penthony Morris.

OUR reader has been told how Mrs. Penthony Morris stormed the Villa Caprini, established herself, child, maid, and Skye terrier within its walls, and became, ere many days went over, a sort of influence in the place. It is not in chemistry alone that a single ingredient, minute, and scarce perceptible, can change the property and alter all the quality of the mass with which it is mingled. Human nature exhibits phenomena precisely alike, and certain individuals possess the marvellous power of tinging the world they mix in, with their own hue and colour, and flavouring society with sweet or bitter, as temper induces them. The first and most essential quality of such persons is a rapid — an actually instinctive — appreciation of the characters they meet, even passingly, in the world's intercourse. They have not to spell out temperaments slowly and laboriously. To them men's natures are not written in phonetic signs or dark symbols, but in letters large and legible. They see, salute, speak with you, and they understand you. Not, perhaps, as old friends know you, with reference to this or that minute trick of mind or temper, but, with a far wider range of your character than even old friends have taken, they know your likes and dislikes, the things you fear and hope, the weak points you would fortify and sometimes the strong ones you would mask — in a word, for all the

purposes of intercourse, they are able to estimate your strength and weakness, and all this, ere, perhaps, you have noted the accents of their voice or the colour of their eyes.

The lady of whom it is now our business to speak was one of this gifted class. Whence she came, and how she became such, we are not about to enter upon. She had had her share of trials, and yet was both young and good-looking; her good looks in no wise evidencing the vestiges of any sorrow. Whether a widowed or deserted wife, she bore bereavement admirably; indeed, so far as one could see, she professed a very rare ethical philosophy. Her theory was, the world was a very nice world, the people in it very nice people; Life itself a very nice thing; and that people, generally speaking, only needed their own consent to be very happy and contented. She had, it is true, some very able adjuncts to carry out her system. There was scarcely an acquirement that she did not possess reasonably well; she spoke several languages, sang, rode, drew, played billiards most gracefully, and could manufacture the most charming cigarettes that ever were smoked. Some of these are envied qualities, and suggest envy; but against this she was careful to guard, and this by a very simple method indeed. In whatever she did, tried, or attempted, she always asked your advice. She had carefully studied the effect of the imputed superiority of those who counsel their neighbours, and she saw in its working one of the most tangible of all human weaknesses. The tendency to guide and direct others is a very popular one. Generous people practise it out of their generosity; gentle natures indulge in the practice

in very sympathy. To stern moralists it is an occasion for the hard lessons they love to inculcate. The young are pleased with its importance, the old are gratified to exercise their just prerogative. "Tell me how do you do this," or "Teach me how to correct that," "What would you advise in *my* place," or "What reply would you give to that," are appeals that involve a very subtle flattery. Every man, and more decisively, too, every woman, likes to be deemed shrewd and worldly-wise. Now, Mrs. Morris had reflected deeply over this trait, and saw to what good account care and watchfulness might turn it. He who seeks to be guided by another makes his appeal in a guise of humility, besides, which is always a flattery, and when this is done artfully, with every aid from good looks and a graceful manner, success is rarely wanting; and lastly, it is the only form of selfishness the world neither resents nor repudiates.

He who comes to you with a perfectly finished tale of his misfortunes, with "Finis" written on the last volume of his woes, is simply a bore; whereas he who approaches you while the catastrophe yet hangs impending, has always an interest attached to him. He may marry the heiress yet, he may be arrested on that charge of forgery, obtain that Cross of the Bath, or be shot in that duel: you are at least talking to a man Fortune has not done with, and this much is something.

Mrs. Morris had been little more than a fortnight domesticated at the Villa Caprini, where her weakness still detained her, and yet she had contrived to consult Sir William about her fortune, invested, almost entirely, in "Peruvians," which her agent, Mr. Halker, had

told her were "excellent;" but whether the people of that name, or the country, or the celebrated Bark, was the subject of the investment, she really professed not to know.

To May Leslie she had confided the great secret of her heart — an unpublished novel; a story mainly comprised of the sad events of her own life, and the propriety of giving which to the world was the disputed question of her existence.

As to Charles, she had consulted him how best to disembarass herself of the attentions of Mr. Mosely, who was really become a persecutor. She owned that in asking his counsel she could not impart to him all the circumstances which he had a right to be possessed of — she appealed to his delicacy not to question her. So that whether wife or widow, he knew not what she might be, and, in fact, she even made of the obscurity another subject of his interest, and so involved him in her story that he could think of nothing else. She managed each of these confidences with such consummate skill, that each believed himself her one sole trusted friend, depositary of her cares, refuge of her sorrows; and while thus insinuating herself into a share of their sympathy, she displayed, as though by mere accident, many of her attractions, and gave herself an opportunity of showing how interesting she was in her sorrow, and how fascinating in her joy!

The Heathcotes — father, son, and niece — were possessed of a very ample share of the goods of fortune. They had health, wealth, freedom to live where and how they liked. They were well disposed towards each other, and towards the world; inclined to enjoy life, and suited to its enjoyment. But somehow, pretty

much like some mass of complicated machinery, which by default of some small piece of mechanism — a spring, a screw, or a pinion the more — stands idle and inert — all its force useless, all its power unused, they had no pursuit — did nothing. Mrs. Morris was exactly the motive power wanting, and by her agency interests sprang up, occupations were created, pleasures invented. Without bustle, without even excitement, the dull routine of the day grew animate; the hours sped glibly along. Little Clara, too, was no small aid to this change. In the quiet monotony of a grave household a child's influence is magical. As the sight of a butterfly out at sea brings up thoughts of shady alleys and woodbine-covered windows, of "the grass and the flowers among the grass," so will a child's light step and merry voice throw a whole flood of sunny associations over the sad-coloured quietude of some old house. Clara was every one's companion, and everywhere — with Charles as he fished, with May Leslie in the flower-garden, with old Sir William in the orangery, or looking over pictures beside him in the long-galleried library.

Mrs. Morris, herself, was yet too great an invalid for an active life. Her chair would be wheeled out into the lawn, under the shade of an immense weeping ash, and there, during the day, as to some "general staff," came all the "reports" of what was doing each morning. Newspapers and books would be littered about her, and even letters brought her to read, from dear friends, with whose names conversation had made her familiar. A portion of time was, however, reserved for Clara's lessons, which no plan or project was ever suffered to invade.

It may seem a somewhat dreary invitation if we ask our readers to assist at one of these mornings. Pinnock, and Mrs. Barbauld, and Magnall, are, perhaps, not the company to their taste, nor will they care to cast up multiplications, or stumble through the blotted French exercise. Well, we can only pledge ourselves not to exaggerate the infliction of these evils. And now to our task. It is about eleven o'clock of a fine summer's day, in Italy, Mrs. Morris sits at her embroidery-frame, under the long-branched willow, Clara, at a table near, is drawing, her long silky curls falling over the paper, and even interfering with her work, as is shown by an impatient toss of her head, or even a hastier gesture, as with her hands she flings them back upon her neck.

"It was to Charley I said it, mamma," said she, without lifting her head, and went on with her work.

"Have I not told you, already, to call him Mr. Charles Heathcote, or Mr. Heathcote, Clara?"

"But he says he won't have it."

"What an expression — 'won't have it!'"

"Well, I know," cried she, with impatience; and then laughingly said, "I've forgot, in a hurry, old dear Lindley Murray."

"I beg of you to give up that vile trash of doggerel rhyme. And now what was it you said to Mr. Heathcote?"

"I told him that I was an only child, 'a violet on a grassy bank, in sweetness all alone,' as the little book says."

"And then he asked about your papa; if you remembered him?"

"No, mamma."

"He made some mention, some allusion to papa?"

"Only a little sly remark of how fond he must be of *me*, or *I* of *him*."

"And what did you answer?"

"I only wiped my eyes, mamma; and then he seemed so sorry to have given me pain, that he spoke of something else. Like Sir Guyon,

He talked of roses, lilies, and the rest,
The shady alley, and the upland swelling;
Wondered what notes birds warbled in their nest,
What tales the rippling river then was telling."

"And then you left him, and came away?" said her mother.

"Yes, mamma. I said it was my lesson time, and that you were so exact, and so punctual, that I did not dare to be late."

"Was it then he asked if mamma had always been your governess, Clara?"

"No; it was May asked that question. May Leslie has a very pretty way of pumping, mamma, though you'd not suspect it. She began with the usual 'Are you very fond of Italy? or don't you prefer England? and then what part of England?'"

Mrs. Morris bit her lip, and coloured slightly; and then, laying her work on her lap, stared steadfastly at the girl, still deeply intent on her drawing.

"I like them to begin that way," continued Clara. "It costs no trouble to answer such bungling questions; and whenever they push me closer, I've an infallible method, mamma — it never fails."

"What's that?" asked her mother, dryly.

"I just say, as innocently as possible, 'I'll run and ask mamma; I'm certain she'll be delighted to tell

you.' And then, if you only saw the shame and confusion they get into, saying, 'On no account, Clara dearest. I had no object in asking. It was mere idle talking,' and so on. Oh dear! what humiliation all their curiosity costs them."

"You try to be too shrewd, too cunning, Miss Clara," said her mother, rebukingly. "It is a knife that often cuts with the handle. Be satisfied with discovering people's intentions, and don't plume yourself about the cleverness of finding them out, or else, Clara" — and here she spoke more slowly — "or else, Clara, they will find *you* out, too."

"Oh, surely not, while I continue the thoughtless, guileless little child mamma has made me," said she. And the tears rose to her eyes, with an expression of mingled anger and sorrow it was sad to see in one so young.

"Clara!" cried her mother, in a voice of angry meaning; and then, suddenly checking herself, she said, in a lower tone, "let there be none of this."

"Sir William asked me how old I was, mamma."

"And you said —?"

"I believed twelve. Is it twelve? I ought to know, mamma, something for certain; for I was eleven two years ago, and then I have been ten since that; and when I was your sister, at Brighton, I was thirteen."

"Do you dare —" But ere she said more the child had buried her head between her hands, and, by the convulsive motion of her shoulders, showed that she was sobbing bitterly. The mother continued her work, unmoved by this emotion. She took occasion, it is true, when lifting up the ball of worsted which had fallen,

to glance furtively towards the child; but, except by this, bestowed no other notice on her.

"Well," cried the little girl, with a half wild laugh, as she flung back her yellow hair, "Anderson says,

On joy comes grief — on mirth comes sorrow;
We laugh to-day, that we may cry to-morrow.

And I believe one is just as pleasant as the other — eh, mamma? *You* ought to know."

"This is one of your naughty days, Clara, and I had hoped we had seen the last of them," said her mother, in a grave, but not severe, tone.

"The naughty days are much more like to see the last of *me*," said the child, half aloud, and with a heavy sigh.

"Clara," said her mother, in the same calm, quiet voice, "I have made you my friend and my confidante, at an age when any other had treated you with strict discipline and reserve. You have been taught to see life — as my sad experience revealed it to me, too — too late."

"And for me, too — too soon!" burst in the child, passionately.

"Here's poor Clara breaking her heart over her exercise," burst in Sir William, as he came forward; and stooping over the child, kissed her twice on the forehead. "Do let me have a favour to-day, and let this be a holiday."

"Oh yes, by all means," cried she, eagerly, clapping her hands.

"The lizard can lie in the sun, and bask
'Mid the odour of fragrant herbs;
Little knows he of a wearisome task,
Or the French irregular verbs.

"The cicala, too, in the long deep grass,
All day sings happily,
And I'd venture to swear,
He has never a care
For the odious rule of three.

"And as for the bee,
And his industry ——"

"Oh, what a rhyme," laughed in Mrs. Morris.

"Oh, let her go on," cried Sir William. "Go on, Clara."

"And as for the bee,
And his industry,
I distrust his toilsome hours;
For he roves up and down,
Like a 'man upon town,'
With a natural taste for flowers.

"There, mamma, no more — not another the whole day long, I promise you," cried she, as she threw her arms around her neck and kissed her affectionately.

"Oh, these doggerel rhymes
Are like nursery chimes,
That sang us to sleep long ago.

"I declare I'm forgetting already, so I'll go and look for Charley, and help him to tie greendrakes, and the rest of them."

"What a strange child!" said Sir William, as he looked fondly after her as she fled across the lawn.

"I have never seen her so thoroughly happy before," said Mrs. Morris, with a faint sigh. "This lovely place, these delicious gardens, these charming old woods, the Villa itself, so full of objects of interest, have made up a sort of fairy-tale existence for her which is positive enchantment. It is, indeed, high time we should tear ourselves away from fascinations which will leave all life afterwards a very dull affair."

"Oh, that day is very distant, I should hope," said he, with sincere cordiality; "indeed, my ward and myself were, this very morning, plotting by what pretext, by what skilful devices, we could induce you to spend your autumn with us."

Mrs. Morris covered her face, as if to conceal her emotion; but a faint sob was still audible from beneath her handkerchief. "Oh!" cried she, in a faint and broken voice, "if you but knew in what a wounded heart you have poured this balm! — if I could tell — what I cannot tell you — at least, not yet — No, no, Sir William, we must leave this. I have already written to my agent about letters for Alexandria and Cairo. You know," she added, with a sad smile, "the doctors have sentenced me to Egypt for the winter."

"These fellows are mere alarmists. Italy is the best climate in the world, or, rather, it has all the climates in the world; besides, I have some wonderful counsel to give you about your bonds. I intend that Miss Clara shall be the great heiress of her day. At all events, you shall settle it with May." And so, with that dread of a scene, a sort of terror about everything emotional — not very unnatural in gentlemen of a certain time of life, and with strong sanguineous temperaments — Sir William hurried away and left her to her own reflections.

Thus alone, Mrs. Morris took a letter from her pocket, and began to read it. Apparently the document had been perused by her before, for she passed hastily over the first page, scarcely skimming the lines with her eye. It was as if to give increased opportunity for judgment on the contents that she muttered the words as she read them. They ran thus:

"A month or six weeks back our proposal might have been accepted, so at least Collier thinks; but he is now in funds, has money in abundance, and *you* know *what* he is at such moments. When Collier went to him at his lodgings in King-street, he found him in high spirits, boasting that he occupied the old quarters of the French Emperor — that he had even succeeded to his arm-chair and his writing-table. 'A splendid augury, Tom,' said he, laughing. 'Who knows but I, too, shall be "restored" one of these days.' After some bantering he stopped suddenly, and said, 'By the way, what the devil brings you here? Isn't it something about Loo? They say you want to marry her yourself, Collier — is that true?' Not heeding C.'s denial, given in all solemnity, he went on to show that you could be no possible use to Collier — that he himself could utilise your abilities, and give your talents a fitting sphere; whereas in Collier's set you would be utterly lost. C. said it was as good as a play to hear his talk of all the fine things you might have done, and might yet do, in concert. 'Then there's Clara, too,' cried he, again; 'she'll make the greatest hit of our day. She can come out for a season at the Haymarket, and she can marry whoever she likes.' Once in this vein, it was very hard to bring him back to anything like a bargain. Indeed, Collier says he wouldn't hear of any but immense terms — ridiculed the notion of your wanting to be free, for mere freedom's sake, and jocularly said, 'Tell me frankly, whom does *she* want to marry? or who wants to marry *her*? I'm not an unreasonable fellow if I'm treated on "the square."'" Collier assured him that you only desired liberty, that you might take your own road in life. 'Then let her

take it, by all means,' cried he. 'I am not molesting her — never have molested her, even when she went so far as to call herself by another name; she needn't cry out before she's hurt;' and so on. C. at last brought him to distinct terms, and he said, 'She shall cut the painter for five thousand; she's worth to *me* every guinea of it, and I'll not take less.' Of course Collier said these were impossible conditions; and then they talked away about other matters. You know his boastful way, and how little reliance can be laid on any statement he makes; but certain it is, Collier came away fully impressed with the flourishing condition of his present fortune, his intimacy with great people, and his actual influence with men in power. That this is not entirely fabulous I have just received a most disagreeable proof. When Collier rose to go away, he said, 'By the way, you occasionally see Nick Holmes; well, just give him a hint to set his house in order, for they are going to stop payment of that Irish pension of his. It appears, from some correspondence of Lord Cornwallis that has just turned up, Nick's pension was to be continued for a stated term of years, and that he has been in receipt of it for the last six years without any right whatever. It is very hard on Nick,' said he, 'seeing that he sold himself to the devil, not at least to be his own master in this world. I'm sorry for the old dog on family grounds, for he is at least one of my father-in-laws.' I quote his words as Collier gave them, and to-day I have received a Treasury order to forward to the Lords a copy of the letter or warrant under which I receive my pension. I mean simply to refer them to my evidence on Shehan's trial, where my testimony hanged both father and son. If this incident shows nothing

else, it demonstrates the amount of information he has of what is doing or to be done in Downing-street. As to the pension, I'm not much afraid; my revelations of 1808 would be worse than the cost of me in the budget.

"If I find that nothing can be done with Ludlow, I don't think I shall remain here longer, and the chances are that I shall take a run as far as Baden, and who says not over the Alps after? Don't be frightened, dear Loo, we shall meet at the same table d'hôte, drink at the same public spring, bet on the same card at rouge-et-noir, and I will never betray either of us. Of your Heathcotes, I can learn next to nothing. There was a baronet of the name who ruined himself by searches after a title — an earldom, I believe — and railroad speculations, but he died, or is supposed to have died, abroad. At all events, your present owners of the name keep a good house, and treat you handsomely, so that there can be no great mistake in knowing them. Sufficient for the day is the evil — as the old saying is; and it is a wise one, if we understood how to apply it.

"I have been twice with Hadson and Reames, but there is nothing to be done. They say that the town does not care for a wife's book against her husband; they have the whole story better told, and on oath, in the Divorce Court. A really slashing volume of a husband against his wife might, however, take; he could say a number of things would amuse the public, and have a large sympathy with him. These are Hadson's or Reames's words, I don't know which, for they always talk together. How odd that *you* should have thought of the ballet for Clara just as I had suggested it! Of course, till free of Ludlow, it is out of

the question. I am sorry to seal and send off such a disagreeable letter, dear Louisa, but who knows the sad exigencies of this weary world better than your affectionate father,

“N. HOLMES.

“I accidentally heard yesterday that there was actually a Mrs. Penthony Morris travelling somewhere in Switzerland. Washington Irving, I believe, once chanced upon a living Ichabod Crane, when he had flattered himself that the name was his own invention. The complication in the present case might be embarrassing. So bear it in mind.”

“Tant pis pour elle, whoever the other Mrs. Morris may be,” said she, laughing, as she folded up the letter, and half mechanically regarded the seal. “You ought to change your crest, respectable father mine,” muttered she; “the wags might say that your portcullis was a gallows.” And then, with a weary sigh, she closed her eyes, and fell a-thinking.

That quiet, tranquil, even-tempered category of mankind, whose present has few casualties, and whose future is, so far as human foresight can extend, assured to them, can form not the slightest conception of the mingled pleasure and pain that chequer the life of “the adventurer.” The man who consents to gamble existence has all the violent ecstasies of joy and grief that wait on changeful fortunes. “Shall I hit upon the right number this time? Will red win once more? Is the run of luck, good or ill, or, it may be, exhausted?” These are the questions ever rising to his mind, and what contrivance, what preparation, what spirit of exigency, do they evoke! Theirs is a hand-to-hand conflict with Fate — they can subsidise no

legions, skulk behind no parapets — in open field must the war be carried on; and what cruel war it becomes when every wound festers into a crime!

This young and pretty woman, on whose fair features not a painful line was traced, and whose beautifully chiselled mouth smiled with a semblance of inward peace, was just then revolving thoughts little flattering to humanity generally. She had, all young as she was, arrived at the very ungracious conclusion, that what are called the good are mere dupes, and that every step in life's ladder only lifts us higher and higher out of the realm of kindly sympathies and affections. Reading the great moralist in a version of their own, such people deem all virtue "vanity," and the struggles and sacrifices it entails "vexation of spirit." Let us frankly own that Mrs. Morris did not lose herself in any world of abstractions; she was eminently practical, and would no more have thrown away her time in speculations on humanity generally than would a whist-player, in the crisis of the odd trick, have suffered his mind to wander away to the manufactory where the cards were made, and the lives and habits of those who made them.

And now she had to think over Sir William, of whom she was half afraid; of Charles, whom she but half liked; and of May, whom she half envied. There were none of them very deep or difficult to read, but she had seen enough of life to know that many people, like fairy tales, are simple in perusal, but contain some subtle maxim, some cunning truth, in their moral. Were these of this order? She could not yet determine; how, therefore, should we? And so we leave her.

CHAPTER VIII.

Port-na-Whapple.

ALTHOUGH time has not advanced, nor any change of season occurred to tinge the landscape with colder hues, we are obliged to ask our reader's company to a scene as unlike the sunny land we have been sojourning in as possible. It is a little bay on the extreme north coast of Ireland, closely landlocked by rugged cliffs, whose basalt formation indicate a sort of half-brotherhood with the famed Causeway. Seen from the tall precipices above on a summer's day, when a vertical sunlight would have fallen on the strip of yellow crescent-like beach along which white-crested waves slowly came and went, the spot was singularly beautiful, and the one long, low, white cottage which faced the sea would have seemed a most enviable abode, so peaceful, so calm it looked. Closely girt in on three sides by rocky cliffs whose wild, fantastic outlines presented every imaginable form, now rising in graceful pinnacles and minarets, now, standing out in all the stern majesty of some massive fortress or donjon keep, some blue and purple heaths might be seen clothing the little shelves of rock, and, wherever a deeper cleft occurred, some tall, broad-leaved ferns; but, except these, no other vegetation was to be met with. Indeed, the country for miles around displayed little else than the arid yellowish grass that springs from light sandy soil, the scant pasturage of mountain sheep. Directly in front of the bay, and with a distinctness occasionally startling, might be seen rising up from the sea a mass of stately cliffs, which seemed like a re-

flexion of the Causeway. This was Staffa, something more than thirty odd miles off, but which, in the thin atmosphere of a calm day, might easily be traced out from the little cove of Port-na-Whapple.

Port-na-Whapple had once been a noted spot amongst fishermen; the largest "takes" of salmon — and of the finest fish on the coast — had been made there. For three or four weeks in the early autumn the little bay was the scene of a most vigorous activity, the beach covered with rude huts of branches and boat canvas, the strand crowded with people, all busily engaged salting, drying, or packing the fish; boats launching, or standing in, deep-laden with their speckled freight; great fires blazing in every sheltered nook, where the cares of household were carried on in common, for the fishermen who frequented the place lived like one large family. They came from the same village in the neighbourhood, and, from time out of mind, had resorted to this bay as to a spot especially and distinctively their own. They had so identified themselves with the place, that they were only known as Port-na-Whapple men; a vigorous, stalwart, sturdy race of fellows were they, too, that none molested or interfered with willingly.

About forty years before the time we now speak of, a new proprietor had succeeded to the vast estate, which had once belonged to the Mark-Kers, and he quickly discovered that the most valuable part of his inheritance consisted in the fishing royalties of the coast. To assert a right to what nobody had ever believed was the actual property of any one in particular, was not a very easy process. Had the Port-na-Whapple men been told that the air they breathed, or the salt

sea they traversed, were heritable, they could as readily have believed it, as that any one should assert his claim to the strip of sandy beach where they and their fathers before them had fished for ages.

Sir Archibald Beresford, however, was not a man to relinquish a claim he had once preferred; he had right and parchment on his side, and he cared very little for prescription, or what he called the prejudices of a barbarous peasantry. He went vigorously to work, served the trespassers with due notice to quit, and proceeded against the delinquents at sessions. For years and years the conflict lasted, with various and changeful successes. Now, the landlord would seem triumphant, he had gained his decree, taken out his execution against the nets, the boats, and the tackle, but when the hour of enforcing the law arrived, his bailiffs had been beaten ignominiously from the field, and the fishermen left in full possession of the territory. Driven to desperation by the stubborn resistance, Sir Archy determined on a bolder stand. He erected a cottage on the beach, and established himself there with a strong garrison of retainers well armed, and prepared to defend their rights. Port-na-Whapple was at length won, and although some bloody affrays did occasionally occur between the rival parties, the fishermen were compelled to abandon the station and seek a livelihood elsewhere.

With a confidence inspired by some years of security, Sir Archy diminished his garrison, till at length it was his habit to come down to the bay accompanied by only a single servant. The old feud appeared to have died out; not indeed that the landlord met those signs of respect from his tenantry which imply good understanding between them; no

welcome met him when he came, no regrets followed him when he departed, and even few of the country people accorded the courtesy of touching their hat as they met him passingly on the road. He was a "hard man," however, and cared little for such slights. At length — it was a season when he had exceeded his usual stay at the coast — there came a period of great distress amongst the fishermen. Day after day the boats went out and returned empty. It was in vain that they passed days and nights at sea, venturing far out upon that wild northern ocean — the most treacherous in existence — in vain they explored the bays, more perilous still than the open sea. Their sole subsistence was derived from the sea, and what was to be done? Gaunt famine was stamped on many a hardy face, and strong men dragged their limbs lazily and languidly, as if in sickness. As Sir Archy had never succeeded in obtaining a tenant for the royalty of Port-na-Whapple, he amused himself gaffing the salmon, which he from time to time sent as presents to his friends; and even now, in this season of dearth, many a well-filled hamper found its way up the steep cliffs to be despatched to some remote corner of the kingdom. It was on one of these days that an enormous fish — far too big for any basket — was carefully encased in a matting, and sent off by the Coleraine coach, labelled, "The largest ever gaffed at Port-na-Whapple." Many an eye, half-dazed with hunger, saw the fish, and gazed on the superscription as it was sent into the village, and looks of ominous meaning were cast over the deep cliffs towards the little cottage below. The morning after this, while Sir Archibald's servant was at the post for his letters,

a boat rowed into the little cove, and some men, having thrown out the anchor, waded ashore.

"What brings you here, fellows?" cried Sir Archy, haughtily, as he met them on the beach.

"We are come to gaff a bigger fish than yours o' yesterday," said the foremost, striking him on the forehead with the handle of the gaff; and he passed the spear through his heart while he yet reeled under the blow.

Notwithstanding the most active exertions of the Government of the day and the local magistrature, the authors of the foul deed were never discovered, and although there could be no doubt they were well known to a large population, none betrayed them. More strange still, from that day and hour not a fish was ever taken at Port-na-Whapple! The property had fallen into Chancery, and the interests of the claimants not being very closely guarded, the fishermen were again at liberty to fish wherever they pleased. The privilege was of no value; the fish had deserted the spot, and even when they swarmed at Carrig-a-rede, and all along the shore, not one ever was taken there! That the place was deemed "uncannie," and that none frequented it, need not cause any wonder, and so the little cottage fell into ruin, the boat-house was undermined by the sea and carried away, and even of the little boat-pier only a few bare piles now remained to mark the place, when at length there arrived from Dublin a doctor to take charge of the Ballintray Dispensary, and not being able to find a habitable spot in the village, he was fain to put the old cottage in repair, little influenced by the superstition that attached to the unholy place.

He was an elderly man, whose family consisted of his wife and a single servant, and who, from the day of his first arrival, showed a decided repugnance to forming acquaintance with any, or holding other intercourse with his neighbours, than what the cares of his profession required. In person he was tall, and even stately; his features those of a man once handsome, but now disfigured by two red blotches over the eyes, and a tremulousness of the nether lip, indications of long years of dissipation, which his watery eye and shaking hand abundantly confirmed. Either, too, from a consciousness of his infirmity, or a shame not less deeply rooted, he never met the eyes of those he addressed, but turned his gaze either askance or to the ground, giving him then an expression very different from the look he wore when alone and unobserved. At such times the face was handsome but haughty, a character of almost defiant pride in the eye, while the angles of the mouth were slightly drawn down, as one sees in persons of proud temperament. A few words will suffice for so much of his history as the reader need know. Herbert Layton had the proud distinction of being a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of twenty-one, and, three years later, won, against many distinguished competitors, the chair of medicine in the university. His whole academic career had been a succession of triumphs, and even able men made this excuse for not obtaining honours, that they were "in Layton's division." His was one of those rare natures to which acquirements the most diverse and opposite are easy. The most critical knowledge of the classics was combined in him with a high soaring acquaintance with science, and while he carried away the gold

medal for verse composition, the very same week announced him as prizeman for microscopic researches. And while he thus swept the college of honours, he was ever foremost in all athletic games and manly exercises. Indeed, the story goes that the gown in which he won his fellowship had been hastily thrown over the jacket of the cricketer. If the blemish served to afflict those who felt the truest friendship for him, it rather contributed to exaggerate the prestige of his name that he was haughty and even overbearing in manner; not meanly condescending to be vain of his successes and the high eminence he had won — far from it, no man treated such triumphs with such supercilious levity, boldly declaring that they were within the reach of all, and that it was a simple question of application to any — his proud demeanour had its source in a certain sense of self-reliance, and a haughty conviction that the occasion had not come — might never come — to show the world the great “stuff that was in him;” and thus, many a rumour ran, “Layton is sorry for having taken to medicine; it can lead to nothing: at the Bar he must have gained every eminence — entered Parliament — risen, Heaven knows to what, or where. Layton cannot conceal his dissatisfaction with a career of no high rewards.” And thus they sought for the explanation of that demeanour which hurt the pride of many and the sympathy of all.

Partly from the aggressive nature of the passion of self-esteem, never satisfied if, with each day, it has not made further inroad, partly, perhaps, from the estrangement of friends, wearied out by endless pretensions, Layton at last lived utterly companionless

and alone. His habits of hard work made this the less remarkable; but stories were soon abroad that he had abandoned himself to drink, and that the hours believed to be passed in study were in reality spent in debauch and intoxication. His appearance but unhappily gave some corroboration to the rumour. He had grown careless in his dress, slouching in his walk; his pale, thoughtful face was often flushed with a glow exercise never gives; and his clear, bright eye no longer met another's with boldness. He neglected, besides, all his collegiate duties, his pupils rarely could obtain sight of him, his class-room was always deserted, a brief notice "that the Regius Professor was indisposed, and would not lecture," remaining affixed to the door for the entire session.

While this once great reputation was thus crumbling away, there arose another, and, the time considered, a far more dangerous imputation. It was the terrible period of 1807, and men said that Layton was deep in all the designs of the Emmet party. So completely was the insurrection limited to men of the very humbler walks in life, so destitute was the cause of all support from persons of station or influence, that it is scarcely possible to picture the shock — almost passing belief — of the world when this report began to gain currency and credit. Were the public to-morrow to learn that some great and trusted political leader was found out to be secretly in the pay of France or Russia, it would not excite more incredulous horror than at that day was caused by imputing rebellious projects to Herbert Layton.

The honour of the University was too deeply involved to suffer such a charge to be rashly circulated.

The board summoned the Regius Professor to attend before them. He returned his reply to the summons on the back of a letter constituting him a member of the "United Irishmen," the great rebel association of the day. As much out of regard to their own fame as in pity for a rashness that might have cost him his life, they destroyed the document and deprived him of his fellowship.

From the day that he wandered forth a ruined, houseless, destitute man, little is known of him. At long intervals of time men would say, "Could that have been poor Herbert, that, 'Layton,' taken up by the police for drunkenness, or accused of some petty crime? Was it he who was charged with sending threatening letters to this one, or making insolent demands on that?" Another would say, "I could swear I saw Layton as a witness in one of those pot-house trials where the course of law proceedings is made the matter of vulgar jest." Another met him hawking quack medicines in a remote rural district.

It is not necessary we should follow him through these changes, each lower than the last in degradation. We arrive by a bound at a period when he kept a small apothecary's shop in a little village of North Wales, and where, with seeming reformation of character, he lived discreetly, and devoted himself assiduously to the education of an only son.

By dint of immense effort, and sacrifices the most painful, he succeeded in entering his boy at Cambridge; but in his last year, his means failing, he had obtained a tutorship for him — no less a charge than that of the young Marquis of Agincourt — an appointment to which his college tutor had recommended him. Almost

immediately after this, a vacancy occurring in the little village of Ballintray for a dispensary doctor, Layton applied for the appointment, and obtained it. Few, indeed, of the electors had ever heard of his name, but all were astonished at the ample qualifications tendered by one willing to accept such humble duties. The rector of the parish, Dr. Millar, was, though his junior, perhaps, the only one well conversant with Layton's story, for he had been his contemporary at the University.

On the two or three occasions on which they met, Dr. Millar never evinced by the slightest allusion any knowledge of the other's antecedents. He even, by adroit reference to English life and habits, in contradistinction to Irish, seemed to infer that his experiences were more at home there; and whatever might have been Layton's own secret promptings, there was nothing in the clergyman's manner to provoke the slightest constraint or awkwardness.

The reader is now sufficiently informed to accompany us to the little cottage on the beach of Port-na-Whapple. It is a warm autumnal afternoon, the air calm and still, but the great sea comes heaving in, wave swelling after wave, as though moved by a storm. Strange contrast to that loud thundering ocean the little peaceful cottage, whose blue smoke rises in a thin, straight column into the air. The door is open, and a few ducks, with their young brood, are waddling up and down the blue stone step, as though educating their young in feats of difficulty and daring. On a coarse wooden perch within the hall sits a very old grey parrot, so old that his feathers have assumed a sort of half woolly look, and his bleared eyes only open at inter-

vals, as though he had seen quite enough of this world already, and could afford to take it easily. In the attitude of the head partially thrown forward and slightly on one side, there is a mock air of thought and reflection, marvellously aided by a habit the creature has of muttering to himself such little broken ends of speech as he possesses. Layton had bought him a great many years back, having fancied he could detect a resemblance in him to a once famed vice-provost of Trinity, after whom he called him "Doctor Barret," a name the bird felt proud of, as well he might, and seemed even now, in his half dotage, to warm up on hearing it. Through the open door of a little room adjoining might be seen a very pale, sickly woman, who coughed almost incessantly as she bent over an embroidery-frame. Though not much more than middle-aged, her hair was perfectly white, and deep discolorations — the track of tears for many a day — marked her worn cheeks.

On the opposite side of the hall, in a small room whose furniture was an humble truckle-bed, and a few shelves with physic-bottles, the doctor was engaged at his toilet, if, by so pretentious a term we may record the few preparations he was making to render his everyday appearance more presentable. As he stood thus in trousers and shirt, his broad chest and powerful neck exposed, he seemed to testify even yet to the athletic vigour of one who was known as the best hurler and racket-player of his day. He had been swimming a long stretch far out to sea, and the air and exercise together had effaced many of those signs of dissipation which his face usually wore, while in his voice there was a frank boldness that only came back to him at some rare intervals.

"I can fancy, Grace," cried he, loud enough to be heard across the hall, "that Millar is quite proud of his condescension. The great rector of the parish, man of fortune besides, stooping to invite the dispensary doctor! Twelve hundred per annum associating with eighty! To be sure he says, 'You will only meet two friends and neighbours of mine' — as though to intimate, 'I am doing this on the sly; I don't mean to make you a guest on field-days.'"

She muttered something, speedily interrupted by a cough, and he not caring to catch her words, went on:

"It is a politeness that cuts both ways, and makes *me* as uncomfortable as him. This waistcoat has a beggarly account of empty button-holes, and as for my coat, nothing but a dim candlelight would screen its deficiencies. I was a fool to accept!" cried he, impatiently.

"Don't go, Tom! don't go!" screamed the parrot, addressing him by a familiar sobriquet.

"And why not, Doctor?" said Layton, laughing at the *apropos*.

"Don't go! don't go!" repeated the bird.

"Give me your reasons, old boy, and not impossible is it I'll agree with you. What do you say, Grace?" added he, advancing to the door of his room the better to catch her words.

"It is to them the honour is *done*, not to you," said she, faintly, and as though the speech cost her heavily.

"Very hard to persuade the rector of that — very hard to convince the man of silver side-dishes and cut decanters that he is not the patron of him who dines off delf and drinks out of pewter. Is this cravat too ragged, Grace? I think I'd better wear my black one."

"Yes, the black one," said she, coughing painfully.

"After all, it is no grand occasion — a little party of four."

"What a swell! what a swell!" shrieked the parrot.

"Ain't I? By Jove," laughed Layton, "the Doctor is marvellous in his remarks to-day."

"There, I have done my best with such scanty 'properties,'" said he, as he turned away from the glass. "The greatest peril to a shabby man is the self-imposed obligation to show he is better than he looks. It is an almost invariable blunder."

She muttered something inaudibly, and, as usual, he went on with his own thoughts.

"One either assumes a more dictatorial tone, or takes more than his share of the talk, or is more apt to contradict the great man of the company — at least *I* do."

"Don't go, Tom! don't! don't!" called out Doctor Barret.

"Not go? — after all these splendid preparations!" said Layton, with a laugh. "After yourself exclaiming 'What a swell!'"

"It'll never pay — never pay — never pay!" croaked out Poll.

"That I'm sure of, Doctor. I never knew one of these politic things that did; but yet we go on through life practising them in the face of all their failure, dancing attendance at levees, loitering in ante-chambers, all to be remembered by some great man who is just as likely to hate the sight of us. However, this shall be my last transgression."

The faint female voice muttered some indistinct words about what he "owed to himself," and the "right-

ful station that belonged to him," but he speedily cut the reflection short as he said, "So long as a man is poor as I am, he can only hold his head high by total estrangement from the world. Let him dare to mix with it, and his threadbare coat and patched shoes will soon convince him that they will extend no equality to him who comes among them in such beggarly fashion. With what authority, I ask, can he speak, whose very poverty refutes his sentiments, and the simple question stands forth unanswerable: 'If this man knew so much, why is he as we see him?'"

"This is, then, to say that misfortune is never unmerited. Surely you do not mean that, Herbert?" said she, with an eagerness almost painful.

"It is exactly what I would say — That for all the purposes of worldly judgments upon men, there is no easier rule than to assume that they who fail deserve failure. Richelieu never asked those who sought high command, 'Are you skilful in the field? are you clever in strategy?' but 'Are you lucky?'"

A deep sigh was her only answer.

"I wonder who Millar's fourth man is to be? Colonel Karstairs I know is one; a man of importance to *me*, Grace," said he, laughing; "a two-guinea subscriber to the dispensary! How I wish I were in a more fitting spirit of submissiveness to my betters; and, by ill fortune, this is one of my rebellious days!"

"Don't go, Tom! Don't go, I say!" yelled out Poll. "Prophet of evil, and evil prophet, hold your tongue! I will go," said he, sternly, and as if answering a responsible adviser; and setting his hat on, with a certain air of dogged defiance, he left the house.

His wife arose, and with feeble steps tottered to

the door of the cottage to look after him. A few steps brought him to the foot of the cliff, up the steep face of which a zig-zag path led upwards for fully four hundred feet, a narrow track trodden by the bare feet of hardy mountaineers, into some semblance of a pathway, but such as few denizens of towns would willingly have taken. Layton, however, stepped along like one whose foot was not new to the heather; nay, the very nature of the ascent, the bracing air of the sea, and something in the peril itself of the way, seemed to revive in the man his ancient vigour; and few, seeing him from the beach below, as he boldly breasted the steep bluff, or sprang lightly over some fissured chasm, would have deemed him one long since past the prime of life — one, who had spent more than youth, and its ambitions, in excess.

At first, the spirit to press onward appeared to possess him entirely, but ere he reached the half ascent he turned to look down on the yellow strip of strand, and the little cottage, up to whose very door-sill now the foam seemed curling. Never before had its isolation seemed so complete. Not a sail was to be seen seaward, not even a gull broke the stillness with his cry; a low, mournful plash, with now and then a rumbling half thunder, as the sea resounded within some rocky cavern, were the only sounds, and Layton sat down on a mossy ledge, to drink in the solitude in all its fullness. Amidst thoughts of mingled pain and pleasure, memories of long-past struggles, college triumphs and college friendships, came dreary recollections of dark reverses, when the world seemed to fall back from him, and leave him to isolation. Few had ever started with more ambitious yearnings — few with more personal

assurances of success. Whatever he tried he was sure to be told, "*There* lies your road, Layton; *that* is the path will lead you to high rewards." He had, besides — strange inexplicable gift — that prestige of superiority about him that made men cede the place to him, as if by prescription. "And what had come of it all? — what had come of it all?" he cried out aloud, suddenly awaking out of the past to face the present. "Why have I failed?" asked he wildly of himself. "Is it that others have passed me in the race? Have my successes been discovered to have been gained by trick or fraud? Have my acquirements been pronounced mere pretensions? These, surely, cannot be alleged of one whose fame can be attested by almost every scientific and literary journal of the empire. No, no! the explanation is easier — the poet was wrong — Fortune is a Deity, and some men are born to be unlucky."

With a sudden start he arose, and rallied from these musings. He quickly bethought himself of his engagement, and continued his way upward. When he reached the table-land at top it wanted but a few minutes of five o'clock, and five was the hour for which he was invited, and there was yet two miles to walk to the Rectory. Any one who has lived for a considerable space estranged from society and its requirements, will own to the sense of slavery impressed by a return to the habits of the world. He will feel that every ordinance is a tyranny, and the necessity of being dressed for this, or punctual for that, a downright bondage.

Thus chafing and irritable, Layton walked along. Never was man less disposed to accept hospitality as a polite attention, and more than once did he halt, irresolute whether he should not retrace his steps

towards home. "No man," thought he, "could get off more cheaply. They would ascribe it all to my ignorance. What should a poor devil with eighty pounds a year know of politeness? and when I had said, *I had forgotten the invitation, they would forget me!*"

Thus self-accusing and self-disparaging, he reached the little avenue gate, which by a trim gravel walk led up to the parsonage. The neat lodge, with its rustic porch, all overgrown with a rich japonica — the well-kept road, along whose sides two little paved channels conducted the water — the flower plats at intervals in the smooth emerald turf, were all assurances of care and propriety; and as Layton marked them, he muttered, "This is one of the lucky ones."

As Layton moved on with laggard step, he halted frequently to mark some new device or other of ornamental gardening. Now it was a tasteful group of rock-work, over which gracefully creepers hung in festoons; now it was a little knot of flowering shrubs, so artfully intermingled as to seem as though growing from a single stem; now a tiny fish-pond could be descried through the foliage; even the rustic seats placed at points of commanding view seemed to say how much the whole scene had been planned for enjoyment, and that every tint of foliage, every undulation of the sward, every distant glimpse caught through a narrow vista, had all been artfully contrived to yield its share of pleasure.

"I wonder," muttered he, bitterly, to himself — "I wonder when this man preaches on a Sunday against wealth and its temptations, reminding others

that out of this world men take nothing, but go out upon their new pilgrimage naked and poor, does he ever turn a thought to all these things, so beautiful now, and with that vitality that will make them beautiful, years and years after he himself has become dust? I have little doubt," added he, hurriedly, "that he says all this, and believes it too. Here am I, after just as many determinations to eat no man's salt, nor sit down to any board better than my own — here I am to-day creeping like a poor parasite to a great man's table — ay, he is a great man to *me*!

"How strange is the casuistry, too, with which humble people like myself persuade themselves that they go into the world against their will; that they do so purely from motives of policy, forgetting all the while how ignoble is the motive they lay claim to.

"The old Roman moralist told us that poverty had no heavier infliction in its train than that it made men ridiculous, but I tell him he is wrong. It makes men untrue to themselves, false to their own hearts, enemies to their own convictions, doing twenty things every day of their lives that they affect to deem prudent, and know to be contemptible. I wish my worthy host had left me unnoticed!"

He was at last at the door, and rang the bell with the impatient boldness of one chafing and angry with himself. There was a short delay, for the servants were all engaged in the dining-room, and Layton rang again.

"Doctor Millar at home?" asked he, sternly, of the well-powdered footman who stood before him.

"Yes, Sir; he's at dinner."

"At dinner! I was invited to dinner!"

"I know, Sir; and the doctor waited for half an hour beyond the time; but he has only gone in this moment."

It is just possible, in Layton's then frame of mind, that he had turned away and left the house, never to re-enter it, when a slight circumstance determined him to the opposite. This was the footman's respectful manner as he took the hat from his hand, and threw wide the door for him to pass onward. Ay, it is ever so! Things too trivial and insignificant for notice in this life are every hour influencing our actions and swaying our motives. Men have stormed a breach for a smile, and gone out in black despair with life just for a cold word or a cold look. So much more quickly does the heart influence than the head, even with the very cleverest amongst us.

As Layton entered the dining-room, his host rose to receive him, and, with a polished courtesy, apologised for having gone to table before his arrival. "I gave you half an hour, doctor, and I would have given you longer, but that I am aware a physician is not always master of his time. Colonel Karstairs you are acquainted with. Let me present you to Mr. Ogden. Doctor Layton, Mr. Ogden."

There is no manner that so impresses the world with the idea of self-sufficiency and pretension as that of the bashful man contending against his own diffidence; and this same timidity, that one would imagine so easily rubbed off by contact with the world, actually increases with age, and, however glossed over by an assumed ease and a seeming indifference, lives to torment its possessor to his last day. Of this Layton

was an unhappy victim; and while imbued with a consummate self-esteem, he had a painful consciousness of the criticism that his manner and breeding might call forth. The result of this conflict was to render him stern, defiant, and even overbearing — traits which imparted their character even to his features in first intercourse with strangers.

"I don't know how Halford managed it," said Mr. Ogden, as he reseated himself at table, "but I've heard him say that his professional engagements never lost him a dinner."

Simple as were these words, they contained a rebuke, and the air of the man that uttered them did not diminish their significance.

Mr. Ogden was a thin, pale, pock-marked man, with an upstanding head of grey hair, a very high and retreating forehead, and a long upper lip — one of those men in whom the face, disproportionately large for the head, always gives the impression of a self-sufficient nature. He had a harsh, sharp voice, with an articulation of a most painful accuracy, even his common-places being enunciated with a sort of distinct impressiveness, as though to imply that his copper was of more value than another man's gold. Nor was this altogether a delusion; he had had a considerable experience of mankind and the world, and had contrived to pass his bad money on them as excellent coin of the realm. He was — and it is very distinctive in its mark — one of those men who always live in a class above their own, and, whatever be the recognition and the acceptance they have there, are ever regarded by their rightful equals as something peculiarly privileged and superior.

"My Lord" would have called him a useful man; his friends all described him as "influential." But he was something greater than either — he was a successful man. We are constantly told that the efficiency of our army is mainly owing to the admirable skill and ability of its petty officers. That to their unobtrusive diligence, care, and intelligence, we are indebted for all those qualities by which a force is rendered manageable, and victories are won. Do we not see something very similar in our Bureaucracy? Is not our Government itself almost entirely in the hands of "petty officers?" The great minister who rises in his place in Parliament the exponent of some grand policy, the author of some extensive measure, is, after all, little more than the mouthpiece of some "Mr. Ogden" in Downing-street; some not very brilliant or very statesman-like personage, but a man of business habits, every-day intelligence, and long official traditions — one of those three or four men in all England who can say to a minister, "It can't be done," and yet give no reason why.

The men of this Ogden stamp are, in reality, great influences in a country like ours, where frequent changes of government require that the traditions of office should be transmitted through something higher and more responsible than mere clerks. They are the stokers who keep the fires alight and the steam up till a new captain comes aboard, and, though neither commanders nor pilots, they *do* manage to influence the course of the ship, by the mere fact that they can diminish the force of her speed or increase its power without any one being very well aware of how or wherefore.

Such men as these are great people in that dingy old house, whose frail props without are more than emblems of what goes on within. Of their very offices men speak as of the Holy of Holies; places where none enter fearlessly save secretaries of state, and at whose door inferior mortals wipe their feet with heart-sinking fear and lowness of spirit, rehearsing not unfrequently the abject words of submissiveness with which they are to approach such greatness.

It is curious, therefore, to see one of these men in private life. One wishes to know how M. Houdin will look without his conjuring rod, or what Coriolanus will do in plain clothes; for, after all, he must come into the world unattended with his belongings, and can no more carry Downing-street about with him than could Albert Smith carry "China" to a dinner-party.

And now the soup has been brought back, and the fish, somewhat cold and mangled, to be sure, has been served to Doctor Layton; the servant has helped him to an admirable glass of sherry, and the dinner proceeds pleasantly enough — not, however, without its casualties. But of these the next chapter will tell us.

CHAPTER IX.

A Dinner at the Rectory.

THERE are men who have specialities for giving admirable "little dinners," and little dinners are unquestionably the *ne plus ultra* of social enjoyment. To accomplish these there are far more requirements necessary than the world usually wots of. They are not the triumphs of great houses, with regiments of yellow

plush and gold candelabra; they affect no vast dining-rooms, nor a private band. They are, on the contrary, the prerogatives of moderate incomes, middle-aged or elderly hosts, usually bachelors, with small houses furnished in the perfection of comfort without any display, but where everything, from the careful disposal of a fire-screen to the noiseless gait of the footman, shows you that a certain supervision and discipline prevail, even though you never hear an order and rarely see a servant.

Where these people get their cooks, I never could make out! It is easy enough to understand that fish and soup, your sirloin and your woodcock, could be well and carefully dressed, but who devised that exquisite little entrée? what genius presided over that dish of maccaroni, that omelette, or that soufflé? Whence, besides, came the infinite taste of the whole meal, with its few dishes, served in an order of artistic elegance? And that butler, too; how quiet, how observant, how noiseless his ministration! how steady his decanter hand! Where did they find *him*? And that pale sherry, and that Chablis, and that exquisite cup of Mocha? Don't tell me that you or I can have them all as good, that you know his wine-merchant, and have the receipt for his coffee. You might as well tell me you could sing like Mario because you employ his hairdresser. No, no; they who accomplish these things are peculiar organisations. They have great gifts of order and system, the nicest perceptions of taste, considerable refinement, and no small share of sensuality. They possess a number of high qualities in miniature, and are, so to say, "great men seen through the wrong end of a telescope."

Of this the Reverend Doctor Millar was a pleasing specimen. With that consciousness of having done everything possible for your comfort which makes a good host, he had a racy gratification in quietly watching your enjoyment. Easily and unobtrusively marking your taste for this or preference for that, he would contrive that your likings should be gratified, as though by mere accident, and never let you know yourself a debtor for the attentions bestowed upon you. It was his pride to have a perfect establishment: would that all vanity were as harmless and as pleasurable to others! And now to the dinner, which, in our digression, we are forgetting.

"Try these cutlets, Doctor," interposed the host. "It is a receipt I brought back with me from Provence; I think you'll find them good."

"An over-rich, greasy sort of cuisine is the Provençale," remarked Ogden.

"And yet almost every good cook of France comes from that country," said Layton.

Ogden raised his large double eye-glass to look at the man who thus dared to "cap" a remark of his.

"I wish we could get out of the bastard French cookery all the clubs give us now-a-days," said the Colonel. "You neither see a good English joint, nor a well-dressed entrée."

"An emblem of the alliance," said Layton, "where each nation spoils something of its own in the effort to be more palatable to its neighbour."

"Apparently then, Sir, the great statesmen who have promoted this policy are not fortunate enough to enjoy your sanction?" said Ogden, with an insolent air.

"My sanction is scarcely the word for it. They have not certainly my approval."

"I hope you like French wines though, Doctor," said the host, eager to draw the conversation into some easier channel. "Taste that Sauterne."

"It only wants age to be perfect," said the Doctor, sipping. "All these French white wines require more time than the red."

Ogden again looked through his glass at the dispensary doctor who thus dared to give judgment on a question of such connoisseurship; and then, with the air of one not easily imposed on, said:

"You have travelled much abroad, perhaps?"

Layton bowed a silent assent.

"I think I saw a German diploma amongst the papers you forwarded to our committee?" said Karstairs.

"Yes, I am a doctor of medicine of Göttingen."

"A university, I verily believe, only known to Englishmen through Canning's doggerel," said Ogden.

"I trust not, Sir. I hope that Blumenbach's name alone would rescue it from such oblivion."

"I like the Germans, I confess," broke in the Colonel. "I served with Arentschild's Hanoverians, and never knew better or pleasanter fellows."

"Oh, I by no means undervalue Germans!" said Ogden. "I think we, at this very moment, owe them no small gratitude for suggesting to us the inestimable practice of examination for all public employment."

"In my mind, the greatest humbug of an age of humbug!" said Layton, fiercely.

"Nay, Doctor, you will, I'm certain, recal your words when I tell you that my friend here, Mr. Ogden,

is one of the most distinguished promoters of that system."

"The gentleman would confer a far deeper obligation upon me by sustaining than by withdrawing his thesis," said Ogden, with a sarcastic smile.

"To undertake the task of sustaining the cause of ignorance against knowledge," said Layton, quietly, "would be an ungrateful one always. In the present case, too, it would be like pitting myself against that gentleman opposite. I decline such an office."

"So, then, you confess that such would be your cause, Sir?" said Ogden, triumphantly.

"No, Sir; but it would partake so much the appearance of such a struggle, that I cannot accept it. What I called a humbug was the attempt to test men's fitness for the public service by an examination, at which the most incapable might distinguish himself, and the ablest not pass. The system of examination begot the system of 'grinding' — a vulgar term for a more vulgar practice, and a system the most fatal to all liberal education, limiting study to a question-and-answer formula, and making acquirements only desirable when within the rubric of a Government commission. Very different would have been the result if the diploma of certain recognised educational establishments had been required as qualification to serve the State; if the law ran, 'You shall be a graduate of this university, or that college, or possess the licentiate degree of that school.'"

"Your observations seem, then, rather directed against certain commissioners than the system they practise?" said Ogden, sarcastically.

"Scarcely, Sir. My experience is very limited. I never met but one of them!"

The Colonel laughed heartily at this speech — he couldn't help it; and even the host, mortified as he was, gave a half-smile. As for Ogden, his pale face grew a shade sicklier, and his green eyes more fishy.

"To question the Post-office clerk or the landing waiter," continued Layton, with fresh warmth — for when excited he could rarely control himself — "to test some poor aspirant for eighty pounds per annum in his knowledge of mathematics or his skill in physical geography, while you make governors that cannot speak correctly, and vice-governors whose despatches are the scorn of Downing-street; to proclaim that you want your tide-waiter to be a moral philosopher, but that the highest offices of the State may be held by any political partisan active enough, troublesome enough, and noisy enough to make himself worth purchase; you demand logarithms and special geometry from a clerk in the Customs, while you make a millowner a cabinet minister on the simple showing of his persevering: and your commissioners, too — '*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes!*'"

"You probably, however, submitted to be examined once on a time for your medical degree?" asked Ogden.

"Yes, Sir; and that ordeal once passed, I had ample leisure to unlearn the mass of useless rubbish required of me, and to address myself to the real cares of my profession. But do you suppose that if it were demanded of me to subject myself to another examination to hold the humble post I now fill, that I should have accepted it?"

"I really cannot answer that question," said Ogden, superciliously.

"Then I will, Sir. I would not have done so. Eighty pounds a year is a very attractive bribe, but it may require too costly a sacrifice to win it."

"The neighbourhood is a very poor one," struck in Millar, "and, indeed, if it had not been for the strenuous exertions of my friend Colonel Karstairs here, we should never have raised the forty pounds which gives us the claim for as much more in the presentments."

"And yet you got two hundred and thirty for a regatta in June last!" said Layton, with a quiet smile.

"The way of the world, Doctor; the way of the world! Men are never stingy in what regards their own amusements!"

"That is the port, Doctor, the other is Lafitte," said the Rector, as he saw Layton hesitate about a choice.

And now the talk took a capricious turn, as it will do occasionally in those companies where people are old fashioned enough to "sit" after dinner, and let the decanter circulate. Even here, however, conversation could not run smoothly. Ogden launched into the manufacture of wines, the chemistry of adulterations, and the grape disease, on every one of which Layton found something to correct him — some slip or error to set right — an annoyance all the more poignant, that Karstairs seemed to enjoy it heartily. From fabricated wines to poisons the transition was easy, and they began to talk of certain curious trials wherein the medical testimony formed the turning-point of conviction. Here, again, Layton was his superior in information, and made the superiority felt. Of what the most subtle tests consisted, and wherein their fallacy lay, he was thoroughly master, while his retentive

memory supplied a vast variety of curious and interesting illustration.

Has our reader ever "assisted" at a scene where the great talker of a company has unexpectedly found himself confronted by some unknown, undistinguished competitor, who, with the pertinacity of an actual persecution, will follow him through all the devious windings of an evening's conversation, ever present to correct, contradict, amend, or refute? In vain the hunted martyr seeks out some new line of country, or starts new game; his tormentor is ever close behind him. Ogden wandered from law to literature. He tried art, scientific discovery, religious controversy, agriculture, foreign travel, the drama, and field sports; and Layton followed him through all — always able to take up the theme and carry it beyond where the other had halted. If Millar underwent all the tortures of an unhappy host at this, Karstairs was in ecstasy. He had been spending a week at the Rectory in Ogden's company, and it seemed a sort of just retribution now that this dictatorial personage should have met his persecutor. Layton, always drinking deeply as the wine came to him, and excited by a sort of conflict, which, for years back, he had never known, grew more and more daring in his contradictions, less deferential, and less fearful of offending. Whatever little reserve he had felt at first, oozed away as the evening advanced. The law of physics is the rule of morals, and as the swing of the pendulum is greater in proportion to the retraction, so the bashful man, once emancipated from his reserve, becomes the most daringly aggressive of mortals. Not content with refuting, he now ridiculed; his vein of banter was his richest, and he indulged it in all the

easy freedom of one who defied reprisals. Millar tried once or twice to interpose, and was at last fain to suggest that, as the decanters came round untouched, they should adjourn to coffee.

Ogden rose abruptly at the intimation, and, muttering something inaudible, led the way into the drawing-room.

"You have been too hard upon him, Doctor," whispered Karstairs, as he walked along at Layton's side. "You should be more careful; he is a man of note on the other side of the Channel; he was a Treasury Lord for some six months once; and is always in office somewhere. I see you are rather sorry for this yourself."

"Sorry! I'm sorry to leave that glorious Madeira, which I know I shall never taste again," said Layton, sternly.

"Are you a smoker, Doctor Layton?" said the host. "If so, don't forget this house gives all a bachelor's privileges. Try these cheroots?"

"Liberty Hall!" chimed in the Colonel, with a vacant laugh.

"Not a bad name for your dining-room, Millar," said Ogden, bitterly.

A slight shrug was the parson's answer.

"Is this man a frequent guest here?" he asked again, in a low whisper.

"It is his first time. I need scarcely say, it shall be his last," replied Millar, as cautiously.

"I felt for you, Millar. I felt what pain he must have been giving you, though for myself, I pledge you my word, it was most amusing; his violence, his presumption, the dictatorial tone in which he affirmed his

opinions, were high comedy. I was half sorry when you proposed coffee."

Under pretence of admiring some curiously carved chessmen, Karstairs had withdrawn the Doctor into a small room adjoining; but, in reality, his object was the friendly one of suggesting greater caution and more reserve on his part.

"I don't say," whispered he — "I don't say that you weren't right, and he wrong, in everything. I know nothing about false quantities in Latin, or German metaphysics, or early Christian art. You may be an authority in all of them. All I say is, *he* is a great Government official, and *you* are a village doctor."

"That was exactly why I couldn't let slip the opportunity," broke in Layton. "Let me tell you an incident I once witnessed in my old days of coach travelling. I was going up from Liverpool to London in the Umpire, that wonderful, fast coach that astonished the world, by making the journey in thirty-six hours. I sat behind the coachman, and was struck by the appearance of the man on the box-seat, who, though it was the depth of winter, and the day one of cutting sleet and cold wind, wore no upper coat, or any protection against the weather. He was, as you may imagine, speedily wet through, and presented in his dripping and soaked habiliments as sorry a spectacle as need be. In fact, if any man's external could proclaim want and privation, his did. These signs of poverty, however, could not screen him from the application of 'Won't you remember the coachman, Sir?' He, with no small difficulty, for he was nearly benumbed with cold, extricated a sixpence from his pocket and tendered it. The burly driver flung it con-

temptuously back to him with insult, and sneeringly asked him, how he could dare to seat himself on the box when he was travelling like a pauper? The traveller never answered a word; a slight flush once, indeed, showed how the insult stung him, but he never uttered a syllable.

“‘If I had you down here for five minutes, I’d teach you as how you’d set yourself on the box-seat again!’ cried coachee, whose passion seemed only aggravated by the other’s submission. Scarcely were the words spoken, when the dripping traveller began to descend from the coach. He was soon on the ground, and almost as he touched it, the coachman rushed upon him. It was a hand-to-hand conflict, which, however, could not have lasted four minutes. The stranger not only ‘stopped’ every blow of the other, but followed each ‘stop’ by a well-sent-in one of his own, dealt with a force that, judging from his size, seemed miraculous. With closed eyes, a smashed jaw, and a disabled wrist, the coachman was carried away; while the other, as he drank off a glass of cold water, simply said, ‘If that man wishes to know where to find me again, tell him to ask for Tom Spring, Crane-alley, Borough-road!’”

Karstairs followed the anecdote with interest, but somehow, for he was not a very brilliant man, though “an excellent officer,” missed the application. “Capital — excellent — by Jove!” cried he. “I’d have given a crown to have seen it.”

Layton turned away in half ill-humour.

“And so it was Tom Spring himself,” said the Colonel. “Who’d have guessed it?”

Layton made no reply, but began setting the chessmen upon the board at random.

"Is this another amongst your manifold accomplishments, Sir?" asked Ogden, as he came up to the table.

"I play most games," said Layton, carelessly; "but it's only at billiards that I pretend to any skill."

"I'm a very unworthy antagonist," said Ogden; "but perhaps you will condescend to a game with me — at chess, I mean?"

"With pleasure," said Layton, setting the pieces at once. He won the first move, and just as he was about to begin, he stopped, and said, "I wish I knew your strength."

"The players give me a knight, and generally beat me," said Ogden.

"Oh! I understand. Will you allow me to fetch a cheroot? I move king's knight's pawn one square." He arose as he spoke, and walked into the adjoining room.

Ogden moved his queen's pawn.

Layton, from the adjoining room, asked the move, and then said, "king's bishop to knight's first square;" meanwhile continuing to search for a cigar to his liking.

"Do you purpose to continue the game without seeing the board?" asked Ogden, as he bit his lip with impatience.

"Not if you prefer otherwise," said Layton, who now came back to his place, with his cigar fully lighted.

"You see what an inexorable enemy I have, Millar," said Ogden, with an affected laugh; "he will not be satisfied unless my defeat be ignominious."

"Is it so certain to be a defeat, George?" said the

Rector. "Chess was always your great game. I remember how the Windsor Club entertained you on the occasion of your victory over that Swiss player, Eshwald."

"And so you have beaten Eshwald," broke in Layton, hastily. "We must give no quarter here." And with this he threw away his cigar, and bent down over the board.

"We shall only disturb them, Karstairs; come along into the drawing-room, and let us talk parish business," said the Rector. "Our little dinner has scarcely gone off so well as I had expected," said Millar, when they were alone. "I meant to do our Doctor a service, by asking him to meet Ogden, who has patronage and influence in every quarter; but I suspect that this evening will be remembered grievously against him."

"I confess I was highly amused at it all, and not sorry to see your friend Ogden so sorely baited. You know well what a life he has led us here for the last week."

"A hard hitter sometimes, to be sure," said the Rector, smiling; "but a well-meaning man, and always ready for a kind action. I wish Layton had used more moderation — more deference towards him."

"Your Madeira did it all, Millar. Why did you give the fellow such insinuating tippie as that old '31 wine?"

"I can't say that I was not forewarned," continued Millar. "I was told, on his coming down to our neighbourhood, to be careful of him. It was even intimated to me that his ungovernable and overbearing temper had wrecked his whole fortune in life; for of course

one can easily see such a man ought not to be sentenced to the charge of a village dispensary."

"No matter how clever you are, there must be discipline; that's what I've always told the youngsters in my regiment."

The Rector sighed; it was one of those hopeless little sighs a man involuntarily heaves when he finds that his companion in a tête-à-tête is always "half an hour behind the coach."

"I intended, besides," resumed Millar, "that Ogden should have recommended to the Government the establishment of a small hospital down here; an additional fifty or sixty pounds a year would have been a great help to Layton."

"And of course he'll do it, when you ask him," said the hearty Colonel. "Now that he has seen the man, and had the measure of his capacity, he'll be all the readier to serve him."

"The cleverest of all my school and college companions sacrificed his whole career in life by shooting the pheasant a great Minister had just 'marked.' He was about to be invited to spend a week at Drayton; but the invitation never came."

"I protest, Millar, I don't understand that sort of thing."

"Have you never felt, when walking very fast, and eagerly intent upon some object, that if an urchin crossed your path, or came rudely against you, it was hard to resist the temptation of giving him a box on the ear? I don't mean to say that the cases are parallel, but great people do somehow acquire a habit of thinking that the road ought always to be cleared

for *them*, and they will not endure whatever interferes with their wishes."

"But don't you think if you gave Layton a hint —"

"Isn't that like it? Hear that —"

A loud burst of laughter from the adjoining room cut short the colloquy, and Layton's voice was heard in a tone of triumph, saying, "I saw your plan — I even let you follow it up to the last, for I knew you were checkmated."

"I'm off my play — I have not touched a chessman these three years," said Ogden, pettishly.

"Nor I for three times three years; nor was it ever my favourite game."

"I'm coming to crave a cup of tea from you, Millar," said Ogden, entering the drawing-room flushed in the cheek, and with a flurried manner.

"Who won the game?" asked the Colonel, eagerly.

"Doctor Layton was the conqueror; but I don't regard myself as an ignoble foe, notwithstanding," said Ogden, with a sort of look of appeal towards the Doctor.

"I'll give you a bishop and play you for —" He stopped in some confusion, and then, with an effort at a laugh, added, "I was going to say fifty pounds, quite forgetting that it was possible you might beat me."

"And yet, Sir, I have the presumption to think that there are things which I could do fully as well as Doctor Layton."

Layton turned hastily round from the table, where, having half filled a large glass with brandy, he was about to fill up with soda-water; he set down the

unopened soda-water bottle, and drinking off the raw spirit at a draught, said,

“What are they? let’s hear them, for I take the challenge; these gentlemen be my witnesses that I accepted the gage before I knew your weapon.” Here he replenished his glass, and this time still higher than before, and drank it off. “You have, doubtless, your speciality, your pet subject, art or science, what is it? or have you more than one? You’re not like the fellow that Scott tells us could only talk of tanned leather — eh, Millar, you remember that anecdote?”

The Rector started with that sort of spasm that unobtrusive men feel when first accosted familiarly by those almost strangers to them.

“Better brandy than this I never tasted,” said Layton, now filling out a bumper, while his hand shook so much that he spilled the liquor over the table; “and, as Tom Warrender used to say, as he who gives you unpleasant advice is bound in honour to lend you money, so he who gives you light claret, if he be a man of honour, will console you with old brandy, afterwards; and you are a man of honour, Millar, and a man of conscience, and so is our Colonel here — albeit nothing remarkable in other respects; and as for that public servant, as he likes to call himself — the public servant, if I must be candid — the public servant is neither more nor less than —” Here he stretched out his arm to its full length to give by the gesture greater emphasis to what he was about to utter, and then staring half wildly, half insolently around him, he sank down heavily into a deep arm-chair, and as his arms dropped listlessly beside him, fell back insensible.

"I will say that I never felt deeper obligation to a brandy-bottle; it is the first enjoyable moment of the whole evening," said Ogden, as he sat down to the tea-table.

In somewhat less than half an hour afterwards Layton awoke with a sort of start, and looked wildly and confusedly around him. What, or how much he remembered of the events of the evening, is not possible to say, as, with a sudden spring to his feet, he took his hat, and with a short "good-night," left the house, and hurried down the avenue.

CHAPTER X.

The Laboratory.

THERE was a small closet-like room in Layton's cottage which he had fitted up, as well as his very narrow means permitted, as a laboratory. Everything in it was, of course, of the very humblest kind, soda-water flasks were fashioned into retorts, and even blacking-jars held strange chemical mixtures. Here, however, he spent most of his time in the search of some ingredient by which he hoped to arrest the progress of all spasmodic disease. An accidental benefit he had himself derived from a certain salt of ammonia had suggested the inquiry, and for years back this had constituted the main object of all his thoughts. Determined, if his discovery were to prove a success, it should burst upon the world in all its completeness, he had never revealed to any one but his son the object of his studies. Alfred, indeed, was made participator of his hopes and ambitions; he had seen all the steps of the inquiry, and understood thoroughly the train of

reasoning on which the theory was based. The young man's patience in investigation, and his powers of calculation, were of immense value to his father, and Layton deeply regretted the absence of the one sole assistant he could or would confide in. A certain impatience, partly constitutional, partly from habits of intemperance, had indisposed the old man to those laborious calculations by which chemical discovery is so frequently accompanied, and these he threw upon his son, who never deemed any labour too great, or any investigation too wearisome, if it should save his father some part of his daily fatigue. It was not for months after Alfred's departure that Layton could re-enter his study, and resume his old pursuits. The want of the companionship that cheered him, and the able help that seconded all his efforts, had so damped his ardour, that he had, if not abandoned his pursuit, at least deferred its prosecution indefinitely. At last, however, by a vigorous effort he resumed his old labour, and in the interest of his search he soon regained much of his former ambition for success.

The investigations of chemistry have about them all the fluctuating fortunes of a deep and subtle game. There are the same vacillations of good and bad luck; the same tides of hope and fear; the almost certain prospect of success dashed and darkened by failure; the grief and disappointment of failure dispelled by glimpses of bright hope. So many are the disturbing influences, so subtle the causes which derange experiment, where some infinitesimal excess or deficiency, some minute accession of heat or cold, some chance adulteration in this or that ingredient, can vitiate a whole course of inquiry, requiring the labour of weeks

to be all begun again, that the pursuit at length assumes many of the features of a game, and a game only to be won by securing every imaginable condition of success.

Perhaps this very character was what imparted to Layton's mind one of the most stimulating of all interests; at all events, he addressed himself to his task like one who, baffled and repulsed as he might be, would still not acknowledge defeat. As well from the indefatigable ardour he showed, as from the occasional bursts of boastful triumph in anticipation of a great success in store, his poor ailing wife had grown to fancy that his pursuit was something akin to those wonderful researches after the elixir vitæ, or the philosopher's stone. She knew as little of his real object as of the means he employed to attain it, but she could see the feverish eagerness that daily gained on him, mark his long hours of intense thought, his days of labour, his nights of wakefulness, and her fears were that these studies were undermining his strength and breaking up his vigour.

It was, then, with a grateful joy at her heart she saw him invited to the Rectory — admitted once more to the world of his equals, and the notice of society. She had waited hour by hour for his return home, and it was already daybreak ere she heard him enter the cottage, and repair to his own room. Who knows what deep and heartfelt anxieties were hers as she sought her bed at last? what sorrowful forebodings might not have oppressed her? what bitter tears have coursed along her worn cheeks? for his step was short and impatient as he crossed the little hall, and the heavy slam of his door, and the harsh grating of the lock, told that he was ruffled and angry.

The morning wore on heavily — drearily to her, as she watched and waited, and at last she crept noiselessly to the door, and tapped at it gently.

"Who's there? Come in!" cried he, roughly.

"I came only to ask if you would not have your breakfast?" said she, timidly. "It is already near eleven o'clock."

"So late, Grace?" said he, with a more kindly accent, as he offered her a seat. "I don't well know how the time slipped over; not that I was engaged in anything that interested me — I do not believe I have done anything whatever — no, nothing," muttered he, vaguely, as his wearied eye ranged over the table.

"You are tired to-day, Herbert, and you need rest," said she, in a soft, gentle tone. "Let this be a holiday."

"Mine are all holidays now," replied he, with an effort at gaiety. Then suddenly, with an altered voice, he added: "I ought never to have gone there last night, Grace. I knew well what would come of it. I have no habits, no temper, no taste for such associates. What other thoughts could cross me as I sat there sipping their claret, than of the cold poverty that awaited me at home? what pleasure to me could that short hour of festivity be, when I knew and felt I must come back to this? And then, the misery, the insult of that state of watchfulness, to see that none took liberties with me, on the score of my humble station."

"But surely, Herbert, there is not any one —"

"I don't know that," broke he in. "He who wears finer linen than you is often a terrible tyrant, on no higher or better ground. If any man has been taught

that lesson, *I* have! The world has one easy formula for its guidance. If you be poor, you must be either incompetent or improvident, or both; your patched coat and shabby hat are vouchers for one or the other, and sleek success does not trouble itself to ask which."

"The name of Herbert Layton is a sure guarantee against such depreciation," said she, in a voice tremulous with pride and emotion.

"So it might, if it had not earned a little extra notoriety in police courts," said he, with a laugh of intense bitterness.

"Tell me of your dinner last night," said she, eager to withdraw him from the vein she dreaded most. "Was your party a pleasant one?"

"Pleasant! — no, the very reverse of pleasant! We had discussion instead of conversation, and in lieu of those slight differences of sentiment which flavour talk, we had stubborn contradictions. All *my* fault, too, Grace. I was in one of my unhappy humours, and actually forgot I was a dispensary doctor and in the presence of an ex-Treasury Lord, with great influence and high acquaintances. You can fancy, Grace, how boldly I dissented from all he said."

"But if you were in the right, Herbert —"

"Which is exactly what I was not; at least, I was quite as often in the wrong. My amusement was derived from seeing how powerless he was to expose the fallacies that outraged him. He was stunned by a fire of blank cartridge, and obliged to retreat before it. But now that it's all over, I may find the amusement a costly one. And then, I drank too much wine —" She gave a heavy sigh, and turned away to hide her

look. "Yes," resumed he, with a fierce bitterness in his tone, "the momentary flush of self-esteem — Dutch courage, though it be — is a marvellous temptation to a poor, beaten-down crushed spirit, and wine alone can give it; and so I drank, and drank on."

"But not to excess?" said she, in a half-broken whisper.

"At least to unconsciousness. I know nothing of how or when I quitted the Rectory, nor how I came down the cliffs and reached this in safety. The path is dangerous enough at noonday with a steady head and a cautious foot, and yet last night assuredly I could not boast of either."

Another and a deeper sigh escaped her, despite her efforts to stifle it.

"Ay, Grace, the Doctor was right when he said to me, 'Don't go there.' How well if I had but taken his advice! I am no longer fit for such associates. They live lives of easy security — they have not the cares and struggles of a daily conflict for existence; we meet, therefore, on unequal grounds. Their sentiments cost them no more care than the French roll upon their breakfast-table. They can afford to be wrong as they can afford debt, but the poor wretch like myself, a bare degree above starvation, has as little credit with fine folk as with the huckster. I ought never to have gone there! Leave me now," added he, half sternly; "let me see if these gases and essences will not make me forget humanity. No, I do not care for breakfast — I cannot eat!"

With the same noiseless step she had entered, she now glided softly from the room, closing the door so gently, that it was only when he looked round that he

was aware of being alone. For a moment or two he busied himself with the objects on the table; he arranged phials and retorts, he lighted his stove, and stood fanning the charcoal till the red mass glowed brightly, and then, as though forgetting the pursuit he was engaged in, he sat down upon a chair, and sank into a dreamy reverie.

Another low tap at the door aroused him from his musings, and the low voice he knew so well gently told him it was his morning to attend the dispensary, a distance fully three miles off. More than one complaint had been already made of his irregularity and neglect, and, intending to pay more attention in future, he had charged his wife to keep him mindful of his duties.

"You will scarcely reach Ballintray before one o'clock, Herbert," said she, in her habitually timid tone.

"What if I should not try? What if I throw up the beggarly office at once? What if I burst through this slavery of Patrons, and Chairmen, and Boards? Do you fancy we should starve, Grace?"

"Oh no, Herbert," cried she, eagerly; "I have no fears for our future.

"Then your courage is greater than mine," said he, bitterly, and with one of the sudden changes of humour which often marked him. "Can't you anticipate how the world would pass sentence on me, the idle debauchee, who would not earn his livelihood, but must needs forfeit his subsistence from sheer indolence? — ay, and the world would be right, too. He who breaks stones upon the high road will not perform his task the better because he can tell the chemi-

cal constituent of every fragment beneath his hammer. Men want common work from common workmen, and there are always enough to be found. I'll set out at once."

With this resolve, uttered in a tone she never gainsaid or replied to, he took his hat and left the cottage.

There is no more aggressive spirit than that of the man who, with the full consciousness of great powers, sees himself destined to fill some humble and insignificant station, well knowing the while the inferiority of those who have conquered the high places in life. Of all the disqualifying elements of his own character, his unsteadiness, his want of thrift, perseverance, or conduct, his deficiency in tact or due courtesy, his stubborn indifference to others, — of all these he will take no account as he whispers to his heart, "I passed that fellow at school! — I beat this one at college! — how often have I helped yonder celebrity with his theme! — how many times have I written his exercise for that great dignitary!" Oh, what a deep well of bitterness lies in the nature of one so tried and tortured, and how cruel is the war that he at last wages with the world, and, worse again, with his own heart!

Scarcely noticing the salutations of the country people as they touched their hats to him on the road, or the more familiar addresses of the better-to-do farmers as they passed, Layton strode onwards to the little village where his dispensary stood.

"Yer unco late, Dochter, this morning," said one, in that rebukeful tone the northern Irishman never

scruples to employ when he thinks he has just cause of complaint.

"It's na the way to heal folk to keep them waitin' twa hours at a closed door," said another.

"I'se warrant he's gleb eneuch to call for his siller when it's due to him," said a third.

"My gran'mither is just gane hame; she would na bide any longer for yer comin'," said a pert-looking girl, with a saucy toss of her head.

"It's na honest to take people's money and gie naething for it," said an old white-haired man on crutches; "and I'll just bring it before the Board."

Layton turned an angry look over the crowd, but never uttered a word. Pride alone would have prevented him from answering them, had he not the deeper motive that in his conflict with himself he took little heed of what they said.

"Where's the key, Sandy?" cried he, impatiently, to an old cripple who assisted him in the common work of the dispensary.

The man came close and whispered something secretly in his ear.

"And carried the key away, do you say?" asked Layton, eagerly.

"Just so, Sir. There was anither wi' him — a stranger — and he was mare angry than his Rev'rance, and said, 'What can ye expec'. Is it like that a man o' his habits could be entrusted with such a charge as this?'"

"And Doctor Millar — what did he reply?"

"Na much; he just shook his head this way, and muttered, 'I hoped for better — I hoped for better!' I dinna think they'd have taken away the key, but

that old Jonas Graham kem up at the time, and said, 'It's mare than a month since we seen him' — yourself he meant — 'down here, and them as has the strength for it would rather gae all the gait to Coleraine than tak their chance o' him.' For a' that," said Sandy, "I opened the dispensary door, and was sarvin' out salts and the like, when the stranger said, 'Is it to a cretur like that the people are to trust their health? Just turn the key in the door, Millar, and you'll certainly save some one from being poisoned this morning.' And so he did, and here we are." And poor Sandy turned a rueful look on the surroundings as he finished.

"I can't cure you as Kings used to cure the evil, long ago, by royal touch, good people," said Layton, mockingly; "and your Guardians, or Governors, or whatever they call themselves, have shut me out of my own premises. I am a Priest cut off from his Temple."

"I'm na come here to ask for charity," said a stout old fellow, who stood alongside of a shaggy mountain pony; "I'm able to pay ye for a' your docther's stuff, and your skill besides."

"Well spoken, and like a man of independence," said Layton. "Let us open the treaty with a gill of brandy, and you shall tell me your case while I am sipping it." And with these words he led the way into a public-house, followed by the farmer, leaving the crowd to disperse when and how they pleased.

Whatever the nature of those ailments now so confidentially imparted, they were long enough in narration not only to require one, or two, or three gills, but a full bottle of strong mountain whisky, of which it is

but fair to say the farmer took his share. Layton's powers as a talker were not long in exercise ere they gained their due influence over his companion. Of the very themes the countryman deemed his own, he found the Doctor knew far more than himself; while by his knowledge of life and human nature generally, he surprised his listener, who actually could not tear himself away from one so full of anecdote and observation.

Partly warned by the lateness of the hour — for already the market was over and the streets deserted — and partly by the thick utterance of his companion, whose heavy, bloodshot eye and sullen look now evidenced how deeply he had exceeded, the farmer at last arose to go away.

"You're not 'flitting,' as you call it hereabouts," said Layton, half stupidly. "You're not thinking of leaving me alone to my own company, are you?"

"I maun be thinkin' of home; it's more than twalve miles o' a mountain that's afore me. There's na anither but yoursel had made me forget it a' this while," said the farmer, as he buttoned his coat and prepared for the road. "Just tell me now what's to pay for the bit o' writin' ye gav' me."

"You've had a consultation, my friend — not a visit, but a regular consultation. You've not been treated like the outer populace, and only heard the oracles from afar, but you have been suffered to sit down beside the Augur, to question him, and to drink with him. Pay — nothing to pay! I'll cure your boy, there's my word on't. These cases are specialities with me. Bell used to say, 'Ask Layton to look at that fellow in such a ward; he's the only one of us understands this sort of thing. Layton will tell us all about

it.' And I'm Layton! Ay, Sir, this poor, shabby, ill-dressed fellow that you see before you, is that same Herbert Layton; so much for brains and ability to work a man's way in life! Order another quart of Ha whisky, man — that's my fee; at least it shall be to-day. Tell them to send me pen, ink, and paper, and not disturb me; tell them, besides — no, never mind, I'll tell them that! And now, good day, my honest fellow. You've been *my* physician to-day, as much as I have been *yours*. You have cured a sick heart — cheated it, at least — out of one paroxysm, and so, a good journey, and safe home to you. Send me news of your boy, and good-by." And his head dropped as he spoke; his arms fell heavily at his sides; and he appeared to have sunk into a profound sleep. The stupor was but brief; the farmer was not well out of the village when Layton, calling for a basin of cold water, plunged his face and part of his head in it, baring his brawny throat, and bathing it with the refreshing liquid. As he was thus employed, he caught sight of his face reflected in a much-cracked mirror over the fireplace, and stood gazing for a few seconds at his blotched and bloated countenance.

"A year or two left still, belike," muttered he. "Past insuring, but still seaworthy, or, at least" — and here his voice assumed an intense mockery in tone — "at least, capable of more shipwreck!" The sight of the writing materials on the table seemed to recal him to something he had half forgotten, and, after a pause of reflection, he arranged the paper before him and sat down to write.

With the ease of one to whom composition was familiar, he dashed off a somewhat long letter; but,

though he wrote with great rapidity, he recurred from time to time to the whisky-bottle, drinking the strong spirits undiluted, and, to all seeming, unmoved by its potency. "There," cried he, as he finished, "I have scuttled my own ship; let's see what will come of it."

He called for the landlord to give him wax and a seal. Neither were to be had, and he was fain to put up with a wafer. The letter closed and addressed, he set out homewards; scarcely, however, beyond the outskirts of the village, than he turned away from the coast and took the road towards the Rectory. It was now the early evening, one of those brief seasons when the wind lulls and a sort of brief calm supervenes in the boisterous climate of northern Ireland. Along the narrow lane he trod, tall fox-gloves and variegated ferns grew luxuriantly, imparting a half-shade to a scene usually desolate and bare; and Layton lingered along it as though its calm seclusion soothed him. At last he found himself at a low wall, over which a stile led to a little woodland path. It was the Rectory; who could mistake its trim neatness, the order and elegance which pervaded all its arrangements? Taking this path, he walked leisurely onward, till he came to a small flower-garden, into which three windows opened, their sashes reaching to the ground. While yet uncertain whether to advance or retire, he heard Ogden's sharp voice from within the room. His tone was loud, and had the vibration of one speaking in anger. "Even on your own showing, Millar, another reason for getting rid of him. *You* can't be ambitious, I take it, of newspaper notoriety, or a controversy in the public papers. Now, Layton is the very man to drag you into such a conflict. Ask for no explanations, inquire for

no reasons, but dismiss him by an act of your Board. Your Colonel there is the chairman; he couldn't refuse what you insist upon, and the thing will be done without your prominence in it."

Millar murmured a reply, but Layton turned away without listening to it, and made for the hall door. "Give this to your master," said he, handing the letter to the servant, and turned away.

The last flickerings of twilight guided him down the steep path of the cliff, and, wearied and tired, he reached home.

"What a wearisome day you must have had, Herbert," said his wife, as she stooped for the hat and cane he had thrown beside him on sitting down.

"I mustn't complain, Grace," said he, with a sad sort of smile. "It is the last of such fatigues."

"How, or what do you mean?" asked she, eagerly.

"I have given it up. I have resigned my charge of the dispensary. Don't ask my reasons, girl," broke he in, hastily, "for I scarcely know them myself. All I can tell you is, it is done."

"I have no doubt you were right, Herbert," began she. "I feel assured —"

"Do you? Then, by Heaven! you have a greater confidence in me than *I* have in myself. I believe I was more than two parts drunk when I did it, but doubtless the thought will sober me when I awake to-morrow morning; till when, I do not mean to think of it."

"You have not eaten, I'm sure."

"I cannot eat just yet, Grace; give me a cup of tea, and leave me. I shall be better alone for a while."

CHAPTER XI.

A Remittance.

"A LETTER — a long letter from Alfred," said Layton's wife, as she knocked at his door on the following morning. "It has been lying for four days at the office in Coleraine. Only think, Herbert, and I fretting and fretting over his silence."

"Is he well?" asked he, half gruffly.

"Quite well, and so happy; in the midst of kind friends, and enjoying himself, as he says he thought impossible when absent from his home. Pray read it, Herbert. It will do you infinite good to see how cheerfully he writes."

"No, no; it is enough that I know the boy is well. As to being happy, it is the affair of an hour, or a day, with the luckiest of us."

"There are so many kind messages to you, and so many anxious inquiries about the laboratory. But you must read them. And then there is a Bank order he insists upon your having. Poor fellow! the first money he has ever earned —"

"How much is it, Grace?" asked he, eagerly.

"It is for twenty pounds, Herbert," said she, in a faltering accent, which, even weak as it was, vibrated with something like reproach.

"Never could it be more welcome," said he, carelessly. "It was thoughtful, too, of the boy; just as if he had known all that has happened here." And with this he opened the door, taking hurriedly from her hand the letter and the money-order. "No; not this. I do not want his letter," said he, handing it back to her,

while he muttered over the lines of the Bank cheque. "Why did he not say — or order?" said he, half angrily. "This necessitates my going to Coleraine myself to receive it. It seems that I was overrating his thoughtfulness, after all."

"Oh, Herbert!" said she, pressing both her hands over her heart, as though an acute pain shot through it.

"I meant what I have said," said he, roughly; "he might have bethought him what are twelve weary miles of road to one like me, as well as that my clothes are not such as suit appearance in the streets of a town. It was *not* thoughtful of him, Grace."

"The poor dear boy's first few pounds; all that he could call his own —"

"I know that," broke he in, harshly; "and in what other way could they have afforded him a tithe of the pleasure? It was a wise selfishness suggested the act; that is all you can say of it."

"Oh, but let me read you how gracefully and delicately he has done it, Herbert; how mindful he was not to wound one sentiment —"

"'Pay to Herbert Layton, Esquire'" — read he, half aloud, and not heeding her speech. "He ought to have added 'M.D.:' it is as 'the Doctor' they should know me down here. Well, it has come right opportunely, at all events. I believe I was the owner of some fifteen shillings in the world."

A deep, tremulous sigh was all her answer.

"Fifteen and ninepence," muttered he, as he counted over the pieces in his hand. "Great must be the self-reliance of the man who, with such a sum for all his worldly wealth, insults his patrons and resigns his office — eh, Grace?"

There was in his tone a blended mockery and seriousness that he often used, and which, by the impossibility of answering, always distressed her greatly.

"It is clear you do not think so," said he, harshly. "It is evident you take the vulgar view of the incident, and condemn the act as one dictated by ill-temper and mere resentment. The world is always more merciful than one's own fireside, and the world will justify me."

"When you have satisfied your own conscience, Herbert —"

"I'll take good care to make no such appeal," broke he in. "Besides," added he, with a bitter levity, "men like myself have not one, but fifty consciences. Their after-dinner conscience is not their waking one next morning; their conscience in the turmoil and bustle of life is not their conscience as they lie out there on the white rocks, listening to the lazy plash of the waves. Not to say that, after forty, every man's conscience grows casuistical — somewhat the worse for wear, like himself."

It was one of Layton's pastimes to sport thus with the feelings of his poor wife, uttering at random sentiments that he well knew must pain her deeply; and there were days when this spirit of annoyance overbore his reason and mastered all his self-control.

"What pleasant little sketches Alfred gives of his travelling acquaintances!" said she, opening the letter, and almost asking to be invited to read it.

"These things have no value from one as untried in life as he is," broke he in, rudely. "One only learns to decipher character by the time the world has become very wearisome. Does he tell you how he likes his task? How does he fancy bear-leading?"

"He praises Lord Agincourt very much. He calls him a fine, generous boy, with many most attaching qualities."

"They are nearly all such in that class in very early life, but, as Swift says, the world is full of promising princes and bad kings."

"Lord Agincourt would appear to be sincerely attached to Alfred."

"So much the worse; such friendships interfere with the work of tuition, and they never endure after it is over. To be sure, now and then a tutor is remembered, and if he has shown himself discreet about his pupil's misdeeds, reserved as to his short-comings, and only moderately rebukeful as to his faults, such virtue is often rewarded with a Bishopric. What have we here, Grace? Is not that a rowboat rounding the point yonder, and heading into the bay?"

So rare an event might well have caused astonishment, for since the place had been deserted by the fishermen the land-locked waters of the little cove had never seen the track of a boat.

"Who can it be?" continued he; "I see a round hat in the sternsheets. Look, he is pointing where they are to land him, quite close to our door here." Stimulated by an irrepressible curiosity, Herbert arose and walked out, but scarcely had he reached the strand when he was met by Colonel Karstairs.

"I couldn't trust my gouty ankles down that precipice, Doctor," cried he out, "and although anything but a good sailor, I came round here by water. What a charming spot you have here, when one does reach it!"

"It is pretty; and it is better — it is solitary" said Layton, coldly; for somehow he could not avoid con-

necting the Colonel with a scene very painful to his memory.

"I don't think I ever saw anything more beautiful," said Karstairs, as he gazed around him. "The wild, fantastic outlines of those rocks, the variegated colours of the heath blossom, the golden strand, and the cottage itself, make up a fairy scene."

"Let me show you the interior, though it dispel the illusion," said Layton, as he moved towards the door.

"I hope my visit is not inconvenient," said Karstairs, as he entered and took a seat; "and I hope, besides, when you hear the object of it, you will, at least, forgive me." He waited for a reply of some sort, but Layton only bowed his head stiffly, and suffered him to continue: "I am a sorry diplomatist, Doctor, and have not the vaguest idea of how to approach a point of any difficulty; but what brought me here this morning was simply this: you sent that letter" — here he drew one from his pocket, and handed it to Layton — "to our friend the Rector."

"Yes; it is my hand, and I left it myself at the parsonage."

"Well, now, Millar has shown it to no one but myself — indeed, he placed it in my hands after reading it — consequently, its contents are unknown save to our two selves; there can, therefore, be no difficulty in your withdrawing it. You must see that the terms you have employed towards him are not such as — are not civil, I mean; in fact, they are not fair. He is an excellent fellow, and sincerely your friend besides. Now, don't let a bit of temper get the mastery over better feeling, nor do not, out of a momentary pique, throw up your appointment. None of us, now-a-days, can

afford to quarrel with his bread-and-butter; and though you are certainly clever enough and skilful enough not to regard such an humble place as this, yet, remember you had a score of competitors when you looked for it. Not to say that we all only desire to know how to be of service to you, to make your residence amongst us agreeable, and — and all that sort of thing, which you can understand far better than I can say it!" Nor, to do the valiant Colonel justice, was this a very difficult matter, seeing that, in his extreme confusion and embarrassment, he stammered and stuttered at every word, while, to increase his difficulty, the manner of Layton was cold and almost stately.

"Am I to suppose, Sir," said he, at length, "that you are here on the part of Doctor Millar?"

"No, no; nothing of the kind. Millar knows, of course, the step I have taken; perhaps he concurs in it — indeed, I'm sure he does. He is your sincere well-wisher, Doctor — a man who really wants to be your friend."

"Too much honour," said Layton, haughtily. "Not to say how arduous the task of him who would protect a man against himself; and such I opine to be the assumed object here."

"I'm sure, if I had as much as suspected how you would have taken my interference," said the Colonel, more hurt by Layton's tone than by his mere words, "I'd have spared myself my mission."

"You had no right to have anticipated it, Sir. It was very natural for you to augur favourably of any intervention by a Colonel — a C.B., with other glorious distinctions — in regard to a poor dispensary doctor, plodding the world wearily, with a salary less

than a butler's. You had only to look down the cliff, and see the humble cottage where he lived, to calculate what amount of resistance could such a man offer to any proposal that promised him bread."

"I must say I wish you would not mistake me," broke in Karstairs, with warmth.

"I am not stating anything with reference to *you*, Sir; only with respect to those judgments the world at large would pronounce upon *me*."

"Am I to conclude, then," said the Colonel, rising, and evidently in anger — "am I to conclude, then, that this is your deliberate act — that you wish to abide by this letter — that you see nothing to recal nor retract in its contents?"

Layton bowed an assent.

"This is too bad — too bad," muttered the Colonel, as he fumbled for his gloves, and dropped them twice over in his confusion. "I know well enough where the sting lies: you are angry with Ogden — you suspect that he has been meddling. Well, it's no affair of mine; you are the best judge. Not but a little prudence might have shown you that Ogden was a dangerous man to offend — a very dangerous man; but of course you know best. I have only to ask pardon for obtruding my advice unasked, a stupid act always, but I'm right sorry for it."

"I am very grateful for the intention, Sir," said Layton, with dignity.

"That's all I can claim," muttered the Colonel, whose confusion increased every moment. "It was a fool's errand, and ends as it ought. Good-by!"

Layton arose, and opened the door with a respectful air.

Karstairs offered his hand, and, as he grasped the other's warmly, said, "I wish you would let me talk this over with your wife, Layton."

The Doctor drew haughtily back, and, with a cold stare of astonishment, said, "I have addressed you by your title, Sir; *I* have mine. At all events, there is nothing in your station nor in my own to warrant this familiarity."

"You are quite right — perfectly right — and I ask pardon." It was a liberty never to be repeated, and the bronzed, weather-beaten face of the old soldier became crimson with shame as he bowed deeply and passed out.

Layton walked punctiliously at his side till he reached the boat, neither uttering a word; and thus they parted. Layton stood for a moment gazing after the boat. Perhaps he thought that Karstairs would turn his head again towards the shore; perhaps — who knows? — he hoped it. At all events, the old Colonel never once looked back, and the boat soon rounded the point and was lost to view.

There are men so combative in their natures that their highest enjoyment is derived from conflict with the world — men whose self-esteem is never developed till they see themselves attacking or attacked. Layton was one of this unhappy number, and it was with a sort of bastard heroism that he strolled back to the cottage, proud in the thought of how he stood, alone and friendless, undeterred by the enmity of men of a certain influence and station.

He was soon in his laboratory and at work, the reaction imparting a great impulse to his energy. He set to work with unwonted vigour and determination.

Chemical investigation has its good and evil days: its periods when all goes well, experiments succeed, tests answer, and results respond to what was looked for; and others when disturbing causes intervene, gases escape, and retorts smash. This was one of the former; and the subtle essence long sought after by Layton, so eagerly desired, and half despaired of, seemed at last almost within reach. A certain salt, an ingredient very difficult of preparation, was, however, wanting to his further progress, and it was necessary that he should provide himself with it ere he advanced any further. To obtain this without any adulterating admixture, and in all purity, was essential to success, and he determined to set out immediately for Dublin, where he could himself assist in its preparation.

"What good luck it was, Grace," said he, as he entered the room where she sat awaiting dinner for him — "what good luck that the boy should have sent us this money. I must go up to Dublin to-morrow, and without it I must have given up the journey."

"To Dublin!" said she, in a half-frightened voice, for she dreaded — not without reason — the temptations he would be exposed to when accidentally lifted above his usual poverty.

"Ay, girl; I want a certain 'cyanuret' of which you have never heard, nor can help me to any knowledge of, but which a Dublin chemist that I know of will assist me to procure; and with this salt I purpose to make myself a name and reputation that even Mr. Ogden will not dare to dispute. I shall, I hope, have discovered what will render disease painless and deprive operation of all its old terrors. If my calculations be just, a new era will dawn upon medical science, and

the physician come to the sick man as a true comforter. My discovery, too, is no empyric accident for which I can give no reason, nor assign no cause, but the result of patient investigation, based upon true knowledge. My appeal will be to the men of science, not to popular judgments. I ask no favour — I seek no patronage. Herbert Layton would be little likely to find either; but we shall see if the name will not soar above both favour and patronage, and rank with the great discoverers, or, better again, with the great benefactors of mankind."

Vainglorious and presumptuous as this speech was — uttered, too, in a tone boastful as the words themselves — it was the mood which Layton's wife loved to see him indulge. If for nothing else than it was the reverse of the sardonic and bitter raillery he often practised — a spirit of scoff in which he inveighed against the world and himself — it possessed for her an indescribable charm. It represented her husband, besides, in what she loved to think his true character — that of a noble, enthusiastic man, eagerly bent upon benefiting his fellows. To her thinking, there was nothing of vanity — no overweening conceit in all these foreshadowings of future fame; nay, if anything, he understated the claims he would establish upon the world's gratitude.

With what eager delight, then, did she listen! how enchanting were the rich tones of his voice as he thus declaimed!

"How it cheers my heart, Herbert, when I hear you speak thus — how bright everything looks when you throw such sunlight around you!"

"Is this the debauchee — is this the fellow we

have been reading of in the reports from Scotland-yard?' methinks I hear them whispering to each other. Ay, and that haughty University, ashamed of its old injustice, will stoop to share the lustre of the man it once expelled."

"Oh, think of the other and the better part of your triumph!" cried she, eagerly.

"The best part of all will be the vengeance on those who have wronged me. What will these calumniators say when it is a nation does homage to my success?"

"There are higher and better rewards than such feelings," said she, half reproachfully.

"How little you know of it," said he, in his tone of accustomed bitterness. "The really high and great rewards of England are given to wealth, to political intrigue, to legal success. It's your banker, your orator, or your scheming barrister who win the great prizes in our State Lottery. Find out some secret by which life can be restored to the drowned, convert an atmosphere of pestilence into an air of health and vigour, discover how an avalanche may be arrested in its fall, and, if you be an Englishman, you can do nothing better with your knowledge than sell it to a company, and make it marketable through shareholders. Philanthropy can be quoted on 'Change like a Welsh tin-mine or a patent fuel company; and if you could raise the dead, make a 'limited liability' scheme of it before you tell the world your secret."

"Oh, Herbert, it was not thus you were wont to speak."

"No, Grace," said he, in a tone of gentle, sorrowful meaning, "but there is no such misanthrope as the

man who despises himself." And with this he hastened to his room and locked the door. It was while carelessly and recklessly he scattered the harsh words by which he grieved her most that he now and then struck some chord that vibrated with a pang of almost anguish within him, uttering aloud some speech which from another he would have resented with a blow. Still, as the criminal is oftentimes driven to confess the guilt whose secret burden is too heavy for his heart, preferring even the execration of mankind to the terrible isolation of secrecy, so did he feel a sort of melancholy satisfaction in discovering how humbly and meanly he appeared before himself.

"A poor man's pack is soon made, Grace," said he, with a sad smile, as he entered the room, where she was busily engaged in the little preparations for his journey.

"Tom, don't go! don't go! don't!" screamed out the parrot, wildly.

"Only listen to the creature," said he; "he's at his warnings again. I wish he would condescend to be more explanatory and less oracular."

She only smiled, without replying.

"Not but he was right once, Grace," said Layton, gravely. "You remember how he counselled me against that visit to the Rectory."

"Don't! don't!" croaked out the bird, in a low, guttural voice.

"You are too dictatorial, Doctor, even for a vice-provost. I will go."

"All wrong! all wrong!" croaked the parrot.

"By Jove! he has half shaken my resolution," said Layton, as he sat down and drew his hand across his

brow. "I wish any one would explain to me why it is that he who has all his life resented advice as insult, should be the slave of his belief in omens." This was uttered in a half soliloquy, and he went on: "I can go back to at least a dozen events wherein I have had to rue or rejoice in this faith."

"I too would say, Don't go, Herbert," said she, languidly.

"How foolish all this is," said he, rising; "don't you know the old Spanish proverb, Grace, 'Good Luck often sends us a message, but very rarely calls at the door, herself?' meaning, that we must not ask Fortune to aid us without our contributing some effort of our own. I will go, Grace. Yes, I will go. No more auguries, Doctor," said he, throwing a handkerchief playfully over the bird and then withdrawing it; a measure that never failed to enforce silence. "This time, at least," said he, "I mean to be my own oracle."

CHAPTER XII.

A Fellow-Traveller on the Coach.

THE morning was raw, cold, and ungenial, as Layton took his outside seat on the coach for Dublin. For sake of shelter, being but poorly provided against ill weather, he had taken the seat behind the coachman, the place beside him being reserved for a traveller who was to be taken up outside the town. The individual in question was alluded to more than once by the driver and the guard as "the Captain," and in the abundance of fresh hay provided for his feet, and the care taken to keep his seat dry, there were signs of a

certain importance being attached to his presence. As they gained the foot of a hill, where the road crossed a small bridge, they found the stranger awaiting them, with his carpet-bag; he had no other luggage, but in his own person showed unmistakable evidence of being well prepared for a journey. He was an elderly man, short, square, and thick-set, with a rosy, cheerful countenance, and a bright, merry eye. As he took off his hat, punctiliously returning the coachee's salute, he showed a round, bald head, fringed around the base by a curly margin of rich brown hair. So much Layton could mark; all signs, as he read them, of a jovial temperament and a healthy constitution; nor did the few words he uttered detract from the impression; they were frank and cheerful, and their tone rich and pleasing to the ear.

The stranger's first care on ascending to his place was to share a very comfortable rug with his neighbour, the civility being done in a way that would have made refusal almost impossible; his next move was to inquire if Layton was a smoker, and, even before the answer, came the offer of a most fragrant cigar. The courtesy of the offered snuff-box amongst our grandfathers is now replaced by the polite proffer of a cigar, and, simple as the act of attention is in itself, there are some men who are perfect masters in the performance. The Captain was of this category; and although Layton was a cold, proud, off-standing man, such was the other's tact, that, before they had journeyed twenty miles in company, an actual intimacy had sprung up between them.

There is no pleasanter companionship to the studious and reading man than that of a man of life

and the world, one whose experience, drawn entirely from the actual game of life, is full of incident and adventure. The Captain had travelled a great deal and seen much, and there was about all his observations the stamp of a mind that had learned to judge men and things by broader, wider rules than are the guides of those who live in more narrow spheres.

It was in discoursing on the political condition of Ireland, that they reached the little village of Cookstown, about a mile from which, on a slight eminence, a neat cottage was observable, the trim laurel hedge that separated it from the road being remarkable in a country usually deficient in such foliage.

"A pretty spot," remarked Layton, carelessly, "and, to all seeming, untenanted."

"Yes, it seems empty," said the other, in the same easy tone.

"There's never been any one livin' there, Captain, since *that*," said the coachman, turning round on his seat, and addressing the stranger.

"Since what?" asked Layton, abruptly.

"He is alluding to an old story, a very old story, now," rejoined the other. "There were two men — a father and son — named Shehan, taken from that cottage in the year of Emmett's unhappy rebellion, under a charge of high treason, and hanged."

"I remember the affair perfectly: Curran defended them. If I remember aright, too, they were convicted on the evidence of a noted informer."

"The circumstance is painfully impressed on my memory, by the fact that I have the misfortune to bear the same name; and it is by my rank alone that I am

able to avoid being mistaken for him. My name is Holmes."

"To be sure," cried Layton, "Holmes was the name; Curran rendered it famous on that day."

The coachman had turned round to listen to this conversation, and at its conclusion touched his hat to the Captain as if in polite acquiescence.

By the time they had reached Castle Blayney, such had been the Captain's success in ingratiating himself into Layton's good opinion, that the Doctor had accepted his invitation to dinner.

"We shall not dine with the coach travellers," whispered the stranger, "but at a small house I'll show you just close by. I have already ordered my cutlet there, and there will be enough for us both."

Never was speech less boastful; a most admirable hot dinner was ready as they entered the little parlour, and such a bottle of port as Layton fancied he had never tasted the equal. By good luck, there was ample time to enjoy these excellent things, as the mail was obliged to await at this place for an hour or more the arrival of a cross-post. A second and a third brother of the same racy vintage succeeded, and Layton, warmed by the generous wine, grew open and confidential, not only in speaking of the past, but also to reveal all his hopes for the future, and the object of his journey. Though the Captain was nothing less than a man of science, he could fathom sufficiently the details the other gave to see that the speaker was no ordinary man, and his discovery no small invention.

"Ay," said the Doctor, as, carried away by the excitement of the wine, he grew boastful and vain, "you'll see, Sir, that the man who sat shivering beside

you on the outside of the mail without a great-coat to cover him, will, one of these days, be recognised as amongst the first of his nation, and along with Hunter, and Bell, and Brodie, will stand the name of Herbert Layton!"

"You had a very distinguished namesake once, a Fellow of Trinity——"

"Myself, Sir, none other. I am the man!" cried he, in a burst of triumphant pride. "I am — that is, I was — the Regius Professor of Medicine; I was Gold Medallist in 18—; then Chancellor's Prizeman; the following year I beat Stack and Naper — you've heard of *them*, I'm sure, on the Fellowship bench; I carried away the Verse prize from George Wolffe; and now, this day — ay, Sir, this day — I don't think I'd have eaten if you had not asked me to dine with you."

"Come, come," said the Captain, pushing the decanter towards him, "there are good days coming. Even in a moneyed point of view, your discovery is worth some fifteen or twenty thousand pounds."

"I'd not sell it for a million; it shall be within the reach of the humblest peasant in the land the day I have perfected the details. It shall be for Parliament — the two Houses of the nation — to reward me, or I'll never accept a shilling."

"That's a very noble and high-spirited resolve. I like you for it — I respect you for it," said the Captain, warmly.

"I know well what had been my recognition if I had been born a German or a Frenchman. It is in England alone scientific discovery brings neither advancement nor honour. They pension the informer that betrays his confederates, and they leave the man

of intellect to die, as Chatterton died, of starvation in a garret. Isn't that true?"

"Too true — too true, indeed!" sighed the Captain, mournfully.

"And as to the Ireland of long ago," said Layton, "how much more wise her present day rulers are than those who governed her in times past! and whose great difficulty was to deal with a dominant class, and to induce them to abate any of the pretensions which years of tried loyalty would seem to have confirmed into rights. I speak as one who was once a 'United Irishman,'" said he.

Laying down the glass he was raising to his lips, the Captain leaned across the table and grasped Layton's hand, and although there was nothing in the gesture which a bystander could have noticed, it seemed to convey a secret signal, for Layton cried out exultingly,

"A brother in the cause!"

"You may believe how your frank, outspoken nature has won upon me," said he, "when I have confided to you a secret that would, if revealed, certainly cost me my commission, and might imperil my life; but I will do more, Layton, I will tell you that our fraternity exists in full vigour — not here, but thousands of miles away — and England will have to reap in India the wrongs she has sown in Ireland."

"With this I have no sympathy," burst in Layton, boldly. "Our association — at least, as I understood it — was to elevate and enfranchise Ireland, not humiliate England. It was well enough for Wolfe Tone and men of his stamp to take this view, but Nielson and myself were differently minded, and *we* deemed

that the empire would be but the greater when all who served it were equals."

Was it that the moment was propitious — was it that Layton's persuasive power was at its highest — was it that the earnest zeal of the man had carried conviction with his words? however it happened, the Captain, after listening to a long and well-reasoned statement, leaned his head thoughtfully on his hand, and said,

"I wish I had known you in earlier days, Layton. You have placed these things before me in a point I have never seen them before, nor do I believe that there are ten men amongst us who have. Grant me a favour," said he, as if a sudden thought had just crossed him.

"What is it?" asked Layton.

"Come and stay a week or two with me at my little cottage at Glasnevin; I am a bachelor, and live that sort of secluded life that will leave you ample time for your own pursuits."

"Give me a corner for my glass bottles and a furnace, and I'm your man," said Layton, laughingly.

"You shall make a laboratory of anything but the dinner-room," cried Holmes, shaking hands on the compact, and thus sealing it.

The guard's horn soon after summoned them to their places, and they once more were on the road.

The men who have long waged a hand-to-hand combat with fortune, unfriended and uncheered, experience an intense enjoyment when comes the moment in which they can pour out all their sorrows and their selfishness into some confiding ear. It is no ordinary pleasure with them to taste the sympathy of a willing listener. Layton felt all the ecstasy of such a moment,

and he told not alone of himself, and his plans, and his hopes, but of his son Alfred, what high gifts the youth possessed, and how certain was he, if common justice should be but accorded to him, to win a great place in the world's estimation.

"The Captain" was an eager listener to all the other said, and never interrupted, save to throw in some passing word of encouragement, some cheering exhortation to bear up bravely and courageously.

Layton's heart warmed with the words of encouragement, and he confided many a secret source of hope that he had never revealed before. He told how, in the course of his labours, many an unexpected discovery had burst upon him; now, some great fact applicable to the smelting of metals; now, some new invention available to agriculture. They were subjects, he owned, he had not pursued to any perfect result, but briefly committed to some rough notes, reserving them for a time of future leisure.

"And if I cannot convince the world," said he, laughingly, "that they have neglected and ignored a great genius, I hope, at least, to make *you* a convert to that opinion."

"You see those tall elms yonder?" said Holmes, as they drew nigh Dublin. "Well, screened beneath their shade lies the little cottage I have told you about. Quiet and obscure enough now, but I'm greatly mistaken if it will not one day be remembered as the spot where Herbert Layton lived when he brought his great discovery to completion."

"Do you really think so?" cried Layton, with a swelling feeling about the heart as though it would burst his side. "Oh, if I could only come to feel that

hope myself! How it would repay me for all I have gone through! How it would reconcile me to my own heart!"

CHAPTER XIII.

How they Lived at the Villa.

THE Heathcotes had prolonged their stay at Marlia a full month beyond their first intention. It was now November, and yet they felt most unwilling to leave it. To be sure, it was the November of Italy in one of its most favoured spots. The trees had scarcely begun to shed their leaves, and were only in that stage of golden and purple transition that showed the approach of winter. The grass was as green, and the dog-roses as abundant, as in May; indeed, it was May itself, only wanting the fire-flies and the violets. One must have felt the languor of an Italian summer, with its closed-shutter existence, its long days of reclusion, without exercise, without prospect, almost without light, to feel the intense delight a bright month of November can bring, with its pathways dry, its rivulets clear, its skies cloudless and blue — to be able to be about again, to take a fast canter or a brisk walk, is enjoyment great as the first glow of convalescence after sickness. Never are the olive-trees more silvery; never does the leafy fig, or the dark foliage of the orange, contrast so richly with its golden fruit. To enjoy all these was reason enough why the Heathcotes should linger there; at least, they said that was their reason, and they believed it. Layton, with his pupil, had established himself in the little city of Lucca, a sort of deserted, God-forgotten old place, with tumble-down

palaces, with strange iron "grilles" and quaint old armorial shields over them; he said they had gone there to study, and *he* believed it.

Mr. O'Shea was still a denizen of the Panini Hotel at the Bagni — from choice, he said, but *he* did not believe it; the Morgans had gone back to Wales; Mr. Mosely, to Bond-street; and Quackinboss was off to "do" his Etruscan cities, the "pottery, and the res of it;" and so were they all scattered, Mrs. Penthonyt Morris and Clara being, however, still at the Villa, only waiting for letters to set out for Egypt. Her visit had been prolonged by only the very greatest persuasions. "She knew well — too bitterly did she know — what a blank would life become to her when she had quitted the dear Villa." "What a dreary awaking was in store for them." "What a sad reverse to poor Clara's bright picture of existence." "The dear child used to fancy it could be all like this!" "Better meet the misery at once than wait till they could not find strength to tear themselves away." Such-like were the sentiments uttered, sometimes tearfully, sometimes in a sort of playful sadness, always very gracefully, by the softest of voices, accompanied by the most downcast of long-fringed eyelids.

"I am sure I don't know how May will manage to live without her," said Charles, who, be it confessed, was thinking far more of his own sorrows than his cousin's; while he added, in a tone of well-assumed indifference, "We shall all miss her!"

"Miss her," broke in Sir William; "by George! her departure would create a blank in the society of a city, not to speak of a narrow circle in a remote country-house." As for May herself, she was almost

heart-broken at the thought of separation. It was not alone the winning graces of her manner, and the numberless captivations she possessed, but that she had really such a "knowledge of the heart," she had given her such an insight into her own nature, that, but for her, she had never acquired; and poor May would shudder at the thought of the ignorance with which she had been about to commence the voyage of life, until she had fortunately chanced upon this skilful pilot. But for Mrs. Morris it was possible, nay, it was almost certain, she should one day or other have married Charles Heathcote — united herself to one in every way unsuited to her, "a good-tempered, easy-natured, indolent creature, with no high ambitions — a man to shoot and fish, and play billiards, and read French novels, but not the soaring intellect, not the high intelligence, the noble ascendancy of mind that should win such a heart as yours, May." How strange it was that she should never before have recognised in Charles all the blemishes and short-comings she now detected in his character! How singular that she had never remarked how selfish he was, how utterly absorbed in his own pursuits, how little deference he had for the ways or wishes of others, and then, how abrupt, almost to rudeness, his manners! To be sure, part of this careless and easy indifference might be ascribed to a certain sense of security; "he knows you are betrothed to him, dearest; he is sure you must one day be his wife, or, very probably, he would be very different — more of an ardent suitor, more eager and anxious in his addresses. Ah, there it is! men are ever so, and yet they expect that we poor creatures are to accept that half fealty as a full homage, and be

content with that small measure of affection they deign to accord us! That absurd Will has done it all, dear child. It is one of those contracts men make on parchment, quite forgetting that there are such things as human affections. You must marry him, and there's an end of it!"

Now Charles, on his side, was very fond of his cousin. If he wasn't in love with her, it was because he didn't very well understand what being in love meant; he had a notion, indeed, that it implied giving up hunting and coursing, having no dogs, not caring for the Derby, or even opening *Punch* or smoking a cigar. Well, he could, he believed, submit to much, perhaps all, of these, but he couldn't, at least he didn't fancy he could, be "spooney." He came to Mrs. Morris with confessions of this kind, and she undertook to consider his case.

Lastly, there was Sir William to consult her about his son and his ward. He saw several nice and difficult points in their so-called engagement which would require the delicate hand of a clever woman; and where could he find one more to the purpose than Mrs. Pen-thony Morris?

With a skill all her own, she contrived to have confidential intercourse almost every day with each of the family. If she wished to see Sir William, it was only to pretend to write a letter, or look for some volume in the library, and she was sure to meet him. May was always in her own drawing-room, or the flower-garden adjoining it; and Charles passed his day rambling listlessly about the stables and the farm-yard, or watching the peasants at their work beneath the olive-trees. To aid her plans, besides, Clara could

always be despatched to occupy and engage the attention of some other. Not, indeed, that Clara was as she used to be. Far from it. The merry, light-hearted, capricious child, with all her strange and wayward ways, was changed into a thoughtful, pensive girl, loving to be alone and unnoticed. So far from exhibiting her former dislike to study, she was now intensely eager for it, passing whole days and great part of the night at her books. There was about her that purpose-like intentness that showed a firm resolve to learn. Nor was it alone in this desire for acquirement that she was changed, but her whole temper and disposition seemed altered. She had grown more gentle and more obedient. If her love of praise was not less, she accepted it with a more graceful modesty, and appeared to feel it rather as a kindness than an acknowledged debt. The whole character of her looks, too, had altered. In place of the elfin sprightliness of her ever-laughing eyes, their expression was soft even to sadness; her voice, that once had the clear ringing of a melodious bell, had grown low, and with a tender sweetness that gave to each word a peculiar grace.

"What is the matter with Clara?" said Sir William, as he found himself, one morning, alone with Mrs. Morris in the library. "She never sings now, and she does not seem the same happy creature she used to be."

"Can you not detect the cause of this, Sir William?" said her mother, with a strange sparkle in her eyes.

"I protest I cannot. It is not, surely, that she is unhappy here?"

"No, no, very far from that."

"It cannot be ill health, for she is the very picture of the contrary."

"No, no," said her mother again.

"What can it be?"

"Say, rather, who?" broke in Mrs. Morris, "and I'll tell you."

"Who, then? Tell me by all means."

"Mr. Layton. Yes, Sir William, this is *his* doing. I have remarked it many a day back. You are aware, of course, how sedulously he endeavours to make himself acceptable in another quarter?"

"What do you mean? What quarter? Surely you do not allude to my ward?"

"You certainly do not intend me to believe that you have not seen this, Sir William?"

"I declare not only that I have never seen, but never so much as suspected it. And have *you* seen it, Mrs. Morris?"

"Ah! Sir William, this is our woman's privilege, though really in the present case it did not put the faculty to any severe test."

For a moment or two he made no reply, and then said, "And Charles — has Charles remarked it?"

"I really cannot tell you. His manner is usually so easy and indifferent about everything, that, whether it comes of not seeing or never caring, I cannot pretend to guess."

"I asked the young man here, because he was with Lord Agincourt," began Sir William, who was most eager to offer some apologies to himself for any supposed indiscretion. "Agincourt's guardian, Lord Somerville, and myself have had some unpleasant pas-

sages in life, and I wished to show the boy that towards *him* I bore no memory of the ills I received from his uncle. In fact, I was doubly civil and attentive on that account; but as for Mr. Layton — isn't that his name?"

"Yes; Alfred Layton."

"— Layton came as the lad's tutor — nothing more. He appeared a pleasing, inoffensive, well-bred young fellow. But surely, Mrs. Morris, my ward has given him no encouragement?"

"Encouragement is a strong word, Sir William," said she, smiling archly; "I believe it is only widows who give encouragement."

"Well, well," said he, hurriedly, and not caring to smile, for he was in no jesting mood, "has she appeared to understand his attentions?"

"Even young ladies make no mistakes on that score," said she, in the same bantering tone.

"And I never to see it!" exclaimed he, as he walked hurriedly to and fro. "But I ought to have seen it, eh, Mrs. Morris? — I ought to have seen it. I ought, at least, to have suspected that these fellows are always on the look-out for such a chance as this. Now I suppose you'll laugh at me for the confession, but my attention was entirely engaged by watching our Irish friend."

"The great O'Shea!" exclaimed Mrs. Morris, laughing.

"And, to tell you the truth, I never could exactly satisfy myself whether he came here to ogle my ward, or win Charley's half-crowns at billiards."

"I imagine, if you asked him, he'd say he was in for the 'double event,'" said she, with a laugh.

"And then, Mrs. Morris," added he, with a sly smile, "if I must be candid, I fancied, or thought I fancied, his attentions had another object."

"Towards *me!*" said she, calmly, but in an accent as honest, as frank, and as free from all concern, as though speaking of a third person. "Oh, that is quite true. Mr. Layton also made his little quiet love to me as college men do it, and I accepted the homage of both, feeling that I was a sort of lightning-conductor that might rescue the rest of the building."

Sir William laughed as much at the arch quietness of her manner as her words. "How blind I have been all this time," burst he in, angrily, as he reverted to the subject of his chagrin. "I suppose there's not another man living would not have seen this but myself."

"No, no," said she, gently; "men are never nice observers in these matters."

"Well, better late than never, eh, Mrs. Morris? Better to know it even now. Forewarned — as the adage says — eh?"

In these little broken sentences he sought to comfort himself, while he angled for some consolation from his companion; but she gave him none — not a word, nor a look, nor a gesture.

"Of course I shall forbid him the house."

"And make a hero of him from that moment, and a martyr of her," quietly replied she. "By such a measure as this you would at once convert what may be possibly a passing flirtation into a case of love."

"So that I am to leave the course free, and give him every opportunity to prosecute his suit?"

"Not exactly. But do not erect barriers just high

enough to be surmounted. Let him come here just as usual, and I will try if I cannot entangle him in a little serious flirtation with myself, which certainly, if it succeed, will wound May's pride, and cure her of any weakness for him."

Sir William made no reply, but he stared at the speaker with a sort of humorous astonishment, and somehow her cheek flushed under the look.

"These are womanish artifices, which you men hold cheaply, of course; but little weapons suit little wars, Sir William, and such are our campaigns. At all events, count upon my aid till Monday next."

"And why not after?"

"Because the Peninsular and Oriental packet touches at Malta on Saturday, and Clara and I must be there in time to catch it."

"Oh no; we cannot spare you. In fact, we are decided on detaining you. May would break up house here and follow you to the Pyramids — the Upper Cataracts — anywhere, in short. But leave us you must not."

She covered her face with her handkerchief, and never spoke, but a slight motion of her shoulders showed that she was sobbing. "I have been so uncandid with you all this time," said she, in broken accents. "I should have told you all — everything. I ought to have confided to you the whole sad story of my terrible bereavement and its consequences; but I could not. No, Sir William, I could not endure the thought of darkening the sunshine of all the happiness I saw here by the cloud of my sorrows. When I only saw faces of joy around me, I said to my heart, 'What right have I, in my selfishness, to obtrude here?' And

then, again, I bethought me, 'Would they admit me thus freely to their hearth and home if they knew the sad, sad story?' In a word," said she, throwing down the handkerchief, and turning towards him with soft and tearful eyes, "I could not risk the chance of losing your affection, for you might have censured, you might have thought me too unforgiving — too relentless!"

Here she again bent down her head, and was lost in an access of fresh affliction.

Never was an elderly gentleman more puzzled than Sir William. He felt that he ought to offer consolation, but of what nature, or for what calamity, he couldn't even guess. It was an awkward case altogether, and he never fancied awkward cases at any time. Then he had that unchivalric sentiment that elderly gentlemen occasionally will have — a sort of half distrust of "injured women." This was joined to a sense of shame that it was usually supposed by the world men of his time of life were always the ready victims of such sympathies. In fact, he disliked the situation immensely, and could only muster a few common-place remarks to extricate himself from it.

"You'll let me tell you everything; I know you will," said she, looking bewitchingly soft and tender through her tears.

"Of course I will, my dear Mrs. Morris, but not now — not to-day. You are really not equal to it at this moment."

"True, I am not!" said she, drying her eyes; "but it is a promise, and you'll not forget it."

"You only do me honour in the confidence," said he, kissing her hand.

"A thousand pardons!" cried a rich brogue. And

at the same moment the library door was closed, and the sound of retreating steps was heard along the corridor.

"That insufferable O'Shea!" exclaimed she. "What will he not say of us?"

CHAPTER XIV.

The Billiard-Room.

MR. O'SHEA had a very happy knack at billiards. It was an accomplishment which had stood him more in stead in life than even his eloquence in the House, his plausibility in the world, or his rose-amethyst ring. That adventurous category of mankind, who have, as Curran phrased it, "the title-deeds of their estates under the crown of their hats," must, out of sheer necessity, cultivate their natural gifts to a higher perfection than that well-to-do, easy-living class for whom Fortune has provided "land and beeves," and are obliged to educate hand, eye, and hearing to an amount of artistic excellence of which others can form no conception. Now, just as the well-trained singer can modulate his tones, suiting them to the space around him, or as the orator so pitches his voice as to meet the ears of his auditory, without any exaggerated effort, so did the Member for Inch measure out his skill, meting it to the ability of his adversary with a graduated nicety as delicate as that of a chemist in apportioning the drops of a precious medicament.

It was something to see him play. There was a sort of lounging elegance — a half purpose-like energy, dashed with indolence — a sense of power, blended with indifference — a something that bespoke the caprice

of genius, mingled with a spirit that seemed to whisper that, after all, "cannons" were only vanity, and "hazards" themselves but vexation of spirit. He was, though a little past his best years, a good-looking fellow — a thought too pluffy, perhaps, and more than a thought too swaggering and pretentious; but, somehow, these same attributes did not detract from the display of certain athletic graces of which the game admits, for, after all, it was only Antinous fallen a little into flesh, and seen in his waistcoat.

It was mainly to this accomplishment he owed the invitations he received to the Villa. Charles Heathcote, fully convinced of his own superiority at the game, was piqued and irritated at the other's success; while Sir William was, perhaps, not sorry that his son should receive a slight lesson on the score of his self-esteem, particularly where the price should not be too costly. The billiard-room thus became each evening the resort of all in the Villa. Thither May Lselie fetched her work, and Mrs. Morris her crochet needles, and Clara her book; while around the table itself were met young Heathcote, Lord Agincourt, O'Shea, and Layton. Of course the stake they played for was a mere trifle — a mere nominal prize, rather intended to record victory than reward the victors — just as certain taxes are maintained more for statistics than revenue — and half-crowns changed hands without costing the loser an after-thought; so at least the spectators understood, and all but one believed. Her quiet and practised eye, however, detected in Charles Heathcote's manner something more significant than the hurt pride of a beaten player, and saw under all the external show of O'Shea's indifference a purpose-like energy, little likely to be

evoked for a trifling stake. Under the pretext of marking the game, a duty for which she had offered her services, she was enabled to watch what went forward without attracting peculiar notice, and she could perceive how, from time to time, Charles and O'Shea would exchange a brief word as they passed — sometimes a monosyllable, sometimes a nod — and at such times the expression of Heathcote's face would denote an increased anxiety and irritation. It was while thus watching one evening, a chance phrase she overheard confirmed all her suspicions — it was while bending down her head to show some peculiar stitch to May Leslie that she brought her ear to catch what passed.

"This makes three hundred," whispered Charles.

"And fifty," rejoined O'Shea, as cautiously.

"Nothing of the kind," answered Charles, angrily.

"You'll find I'm right," said the other, knocking the balls about to drown the words. "Are you for another game?" asked he, aloud.

"No; I've had enough of it," said Charles, impatiently, as he drew out his cigar-case — trying to cover his irritation by searching for a cigar to his liking.

"I'm your man, Inch-o'-brogue," broke in Agincourt; for it was by this impertinent travesty of the name of his borough he usually called him.

"What, isn't the pocket-money all gone yet?" said the other, contemptuously.

"Not a bit of it, man. Look at that," cried he, drawing forth a long silk purse, plumply filled. "There's enough to pay off the mortgage on an Irish estate, I'm sure!"

While these freedoms were being interchanged,

Charles Heathcote had left the room, and strolled out into the garden. Mrs. Morris, affecting to go in search of something for her work, took occasion also to go; but no sooner had she escaped from the room than she followed him.

Why was it, can any one say, that May Leslie bestowed more than ordinary attention on the game at this moment, evincing an interest in it she had never shown before? Mr. O'Shea had given the young Marquis immense odds; but he went further, he played off a hundred little absurdities to increase the other's chances — he turned his back to the table — he played with his left hand — he poked the balls without resting his cue — he displayed the most marvellous dexterity, accomplishing hazards that seemed altogether beyond all calculation; for, all crafty and subtle as he was, vanity had got the mastery over him, and his self-conceit rose higher and higher with every astonished expression of the pretty girl who watched him. While May could not restrain her astonishment at his skill, O'Shea's efforts to win her praise redoubled.

"I'll yield to no man in a game of address," said he boastfully: "to ride across country, to pull a boat, to shoot, fish, fence, or swim — There, my noble Marquis, drop your tin into that pocket and begin another game. I'll give you eighty-five out of a hundred."

"Isn't he what Quackinboss would call a 'ternal swaggerer, May?" cried Agincourt.

"He is a most brilliant billiard-player," said May, smiling courteously, with a glance towards the recess of the window, where Layton was leaning over Clara's chair and reading out of the book she held in her hand.

"How I wish you would give me some lessons," added she, still slyly stealing a look at the window.

"Charmed — only too happy. You overwhelm me with the honour, Miss Leslie, and my name is not O'Shea if I do not make you an admirable player, for I've remarked already you have great correctness of eye."

"Indeed!"

"Astonishing; and with that, a wonderfully steady hand."

"How you flatter me."

"Flatter? ah, you little know me, Miss Leslie!" said he, as he passed before her.

May blushed, for at the moment Layton had lifted his eyes from the book and turned them full upon her. So steadfastly did he continue to look, that her cheek grew hotter and redder, and a something like resentment seemed to possess her; while he, as though suddenly conscious of having in some degree committed himself, held down his head in deep confusion.

May Leslie arose from her seat, and, with a haughty toss of her head, drew nigh the table.

"Are you going to join us, May?" cried the boy, merrily.

"I'm going to take my first lesson, if Mr. O'Shea will permit me," said she; but the tone of her voice vibrated less with pleasure than resentment.

"I'm at my lessons, too, May," cried Clara from the window. "Is it not kind of him to help me?"

"Most kind — most considerate!" said May, abruptly; and then, throwing down the cue on the table, she said, "I fancy I have a headache. I hope you'll excuse me for the present." And almost ere

Mr. O'Shea could answer, she had left the room. Clara speedily followed her, and for a minute or two not a word was uttered by the others.

"I move that the House be counted," cried the Member for Inch. "What has come over them all this evening? Do *you* know, Layton?"

"Do *I* know? Know what?" cried Alfred, trying to arouse himself out of a reverie.

"Do you know that Inch-o'-brogue has not left me five shillings out of my last quarter's allowance?" said the boy.

"You must pay for your education, my lad," said O'Shea. "I didn't get mine for nothing. Layton there can teach you longs and shorts, to scribble nonsense-verses, and the like, but for the real science of life, 'how to do *them* as has done *you*,' you must come to fellows like me."

"Yes, there is much truth in *that*," said Layton, who, not having heard one word the other had spoken, corroborated all of it, out of pure distraction of mind.

The absurdity was too strong for Agincourt and O'Shea, and they both laughed out. "Come," said O'Shea, slapping Layton on the shoulder, "wake up, and roll the balls about. I'll play you your own game, and give you five-and-twenty odds. There's a sporting offer!"

"Make it to *me*," broke in Agincourt.

"So I would, if you weren't pumped out, my noble Marquis."

"And could you really bring yourself to win a boy's pocket-money—a mere boy?" said Layton, now

suddenly aroused to full consciousness, and coming so close to O'Shea as to be inaudible to the other.

"Smallest contributions thankfully received, is *my* motto," said O'Shea. "Not but, as a matter of education, the youth has gained a deuced sight more from *me* than *you*!"

"The reproach is just," said Layton, bitterly. "I *have* neglected my trust — grossly neglected it — and in nothing more than suffering him to keep *your* company."

"Oh! is that your tone?" whispered the other, still lower. "Thank your stars for it, you never met a man more ready to humour your whim."

"What's the 'Member' plotting?" said Agincourt, coming up between them. "Do let *me* into the plan."

"It is something he wishes to speak to *me* about to-morrow at eleven o'clock," said Layton, with a significant look at O'Shea, "and which is a matter strictly between ourselves."

"All right," said Agincourt, turning back to the table again, while O'Shea, with a nod of assent, left the room.

"We must set to work vigorously to-morrow, Henry," said Layton, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder. "You have fallen into idle ways, and the fault is all my own. For both our sakes, then, let us amend it."

"Whatever you like, Alfred," said the boy, turning on him a look of real affection; "only never blame yourself if you don't make a genius of me. I was always a stupid dog!"

"You are a true-hearted English boy," muttered Layton, half to himself, "and well deserved to have

fallen into more careful hands than mine. Promise me, however, all your efforts to repair the past."

"That I will," said he, grasping the other's hand, and shaking it in token of his pledge. "But I still think," said he, in a slightly broken voice, "they might have made a sailor of me; they'll never make a scholar!"

"We must get away — we must leave this," said Layton, speaking half to himself.

"I'm sorry for it," replied the boy. "I like the old Villa, and I like Sir William and Charley, and the girls, too! Ay, and I like that trout stream under the alders, and that jolly bit of grass land where we have just put up the hurdles. I say, Layton," added he with a sigh, "I wonder when shall we be as happy as we have been here?"

"Who knows?" said Layton, sorrowfully.

"I'm sure *I* never had such a pleasant time of it in my life. Have you?"

"*I*? — I don't know — that is, I believe not. I mean, never," stammered out Layton, in confusion.

"Ha! I fancied as much. I thought you didn't like it as well as *I* did."

"Why so?" asked Layton, eagerly.

"It was May put it into my head the other morning. She said it was downright cruelty to make you come out and stop here; that you couldn't, with all your politeness, conceal how much the place bored you!"

"She said this?"

"Yes; and she added, that if it were not for Clara, with her German lessons and her little Venetian barcarolles, you would have been driven to desperation."

"But you could have told her, Henry, that I delighted in this place — that I never had passed such happy days as here."

"I did think so when we knew them first, but latterly it seemed to me that you were somehow sadder and graver than you used to be. You didn't like to ride with us; you seldom came down to the river; you'd pass all the morning in the library; and, as May said, you only seemed happy when you were giving Clara her lesson in German."

"And to whom did May say this?"

"To me and to Clara."

"And Clara — did she make any answer?"

"Not a word. She got very pale, and seemed as though she would burst out a crying. Heaven knows why! Indeed, I'm not sure the tears weren't in her eyes as she hurried away; and it was the only day I ever saw May Leslie cross."

"*I* never saw her so," said Layton, half rebukefully.

"Then you didn't see her on that day, that's certain! She snubbed Charley about his riding, and wouldn't suffer Mrs. Morris to show her something that had gone wrong in her embroidery; and when we went down to the large drawing-room to rehearse our tableau — that scene you wrote for us — she refused to take a part, and said, 'Get Clara; she'll do it better!'"

"And it was thus our little theatricals fell to the ground," said Layton, musingly; "and I never so much as suspected all this!"

"Well," said the boy, with a hesitating manner, "I believe I ought not to have told you. I'm sure she

never intended I should; but somehow, after our tiff ——”

“And did *you* quarrel with her?” asked Layton, eagerly.

“Not quarrel exactly; but it was what our old commander used to call a false-alarm fire; for I thought her unjust and unfair towards you, and always glad when she could lay something or other to your charge, and I said so to her frankly.”

“And she?”

“She answered me roundly enough. ‘When you are a little older, young gentleman,’ said she, ‘you’ll begin to discover that our likings and dislikings are not always under our own control.’ She tried to be very calm and cool as she said it, but she was as pale as if going to faint before she finished.”

“She said truly,” muttered Layton to himself; “our impulses are but shadows our vices or virtues throw before them.” Then laying his arm on the boy’s shoulder, he led him away, to plan and plot out a future course of study, and repair all past negligence and idleness.

Ere we leave this scene, let us follow Mrs. Morris, who, having quitted the house, quickly went in search of Charles Heathcote. There was that in the vexed and angry look of the young man, as he left the room, that showed her how easy it would be in such a moment to become his confidante. Through the traits of his resentment she could read an impatience that could soon become indiscretion. “Let me only be the repository of any secret of his mind,” muttered she — “I care not what — and I ask nothing more. If there be one

door of a house open — be it the smallest — it is enough to enter by."

She had not to go far in her search. There was a small raised terrace at the end of the garden — a favourite spot with him — and thither she had often herself repaired to enjoy the secret luxury of a cigar — for Mrs. Morris smoked whenever opportunity permitted that indulgence without the hazard of forfeiting the good opinion of such as might have held the practice in disfavour. Now, Charles Heathcote was the only confidant of this weakness, and the mystery, small as it was, had served to establish a sort of bond between them.

"I knew I should find you here," said she, stealing noiselessly to his side, as, leaning over the terrace, he stood deep in thought. "Give me a cigar."

He took the case slowly from his pocket, and held it towards her in silence.

"How vastly polite! Choose one for me, Sir," said she, pettishly.

"They're all alike," said he, carelessly, as he drew one from the number, and offered it.

"And now a light," said she, "for I see yours has gone out, without your knowing it. Pray do mind what you're doing; you've let the match fall on my foot. Look there!"

And he did look, and saw the prettiest foot and roundest ankle that ever Parisian coquetry had done its uttermost to grace; but he only smiled, half languidly, and said, "There's no mischief done — to either of us!" the last words being muttered to himself. Her sharp ears, however, had caught them; and had he looked at her then, he would have seen her face a deep

crimson. "Is the play over? Have they left the billiard-room?" asked he.

"Of course it is over," said she, mockingly. "Sportsmen rarely linger in the preserves where there is no game."

"What do you think of that same Mr. O'Shea? You rarely mistake people. Tell me frankly your opinion of him," said he, abruptly.

"He plays billiards far better than *you*," said she, dryly.

"I'm not talking of his play, I'm asking what you think of him."

"He's your master at whist, *écarté*, and piquet. I *think* he's a better pistol shot; and he says he rides better."

"I defy him. He's a boastful, conceited fellow. Take his own account, and you'll not find his equal anywhere. But still, all this is no answer to my question."

"Yes but it is, though. When a man possesses a very wide range of small accomplishments in a high degree of perfection, I always take it for granted that he lives by them."

"Just what I thought — exactly what I suspected," broke he in, angrily. "I don't know how we ever came to admit him here, as we have. That passion May has for opening the doors to every one, has done it all."

"If people will have a menagerie, they must make up their mind to meet troublesome animals, now and then," said she, dryly.

"And then," resumed he, "the absurdity is, if I say one word, the reply is, 'Oh, you are so jealous!'"

"Naturally enough," was the cool remark.

"Naturally enough! And why naturally enough?"

Is it of such fellows as Layton or O'Shea I should think of being jealous?"

"I think you might," said she, gravely. "They are, each of them, very eager to succeed in that about which you show yourself sufficiently indifferent; and although May is certainly bound by the terms of her father's will, there are conditions by which she can purchase her freedom."

"Purchase her freedom! And is that the way she regards her position?" cried he, trembling with agitation.

"Can you doubt it? Need you do more than ask yourself? How do you look on your own case? And yet you are not going to bestow a great fortune. I'm certain, that do what you will, your heart tells you it is a slave's bargain."

"Did May tell you so?" said he, in a voice thick with passion.

"No."

"Did she ever hint as much?"

"No."

"Do you believe that any one ever dared to say it?"

"As to that, I can't say; the world is very daring, and says a great many naughty things, without much troubling itself about their correctness."

"It may spare its censure on the present occasion, then."

"Is it that you will not exact her compliance?"

"I will not."

"How well I read you," cried she, catching up his cold and still reluctant hand between both her own — "how truly I understood your noble, generous nature. It was but yesterday I was writing about you to a very

dear friend, who had asked me when the marriage was to take place, and I said, 'If I have any skill in deciphering character, I should say, Never. Charles Heathcote is not the man to live a pensioner on a wife's rental; he is far more likely to take service again as a soldier, and win a glorious name amongst those who are now reconquering India. His daring spirit chafes against the inglorious idleness of his present life, and I'd not wonder any morning to see his place vacant at the breakfast-table, and to hear he had sailed for Alexandria.' "

"You do me a fuller justice than many who have known me longer," said he, pensively.

"Because I read you more carefully — because I considered you without any disturbing element of self-interest; and if I was now and then angry at the lethargic indolence of your daily life, I used to correct myself, and say, 'Be patient; his time is coming; and when the hour has once struck for him, he'll dally no longer!'"

"And my poor father ——"

"Say, rather, your proud father, for he is the man to appreciate your noble resolution, and feel proud of his son."

"But to leave him — to desert him ——"

"It is no eternal separation. In a year or two you will rejoin him, never to part again. Take my word for it, the consciousness that his son is accomplishing a high duty will be a strong fund of consolation for absence. It is to mistake him to suppose that he could look on your present life without deep regret."

"Ah! is that so?" cried he, with an expression of pain.

"He has never owned as much to me; but I have read it in him, just as I have read in *you*, that you are not the man to stoop to an ignominious position to purchase a life of ease and luxury."

"You were right there!" said he, warmly.

"Of course I was. I could not be mistaken."

"You shall not be, at all events," said he, hurriedly. "How cold your hand is. Let us return to the house." And they walked back in silence to the door.

CHAPTER XV.

Mrs. Penthony Morris at her Writing-Table.

It was late on that same night — very late. The Villa was all quiet and noiseless as Mrs. Morris sat at her writing-table, engaged in a very long letter. The epistle does not in any way enter into our story. It was to her father, in reply to one she had just received from him, and solely referred to little family details with which our reader can have no interest, save in a passing reference to a character already before him, and of whom she thus wrote:

"And so your alchemist turns out to be the father of my admirer, Mr. Alfred Layton. I can sincerely say your part of the family is the more profitable, for I should find it a very difficult problem to make five hundred pounds out of mine! Nor can I sufficiently admire the tact with which you rescued even so much from such a wreck! I esteem your cleverness the more, since — shall I confess it, dear papa? — I thought that the man of acids and alkalies would turn out to be the rogue, and you the dupe! Let me hasten, therefore, to

make the 'amende honorable,' and compliment you on your new character of chemist.

"In your choice, too, of the mode of disembarassing yourself of his company, you showed an admirable wisdom; and you very justly observe, these are not times when giving a dog a bad name will save the trouble of hanging him, otherwise an exposure of his treasonable principles might have sufficed. Far better was the method you selected, while, by making *him* out to be mad, you make *yourself* out to be benevolent. You have caught, besides, a very popular turn of the public mind at a lucky conjuncture. There is quite a vogue just now for shutting up one's mother-in-law, or one's wife, or any other disagreeable domestic ingredient, on the plea of insanity; and a very clever physician, with what is called 'an ingenious turn of mind,' will find either madness or arsenic in any given substance. You will, however, do wisely to come abroad, for the day will come of a reaction, and 'the lock-up' system will be converted into the 'let-loose,' and a sort of doomsday arrive when one will be confronted with very unwelcome acquaintances."

As she had written thus far, a very gentle voice at her door whispered, "May I come in, dearest?"

"Oh, darling, is it you?" cried Mrs. Morris, throwing a sheet of paper over her half-written epistle. "I was just writing about you. My sweet May, I have a dear old godmother down in Devonshire who loves to hear of those who love *me*; and it is such a pleasure, besides, to write about those who are happy."

"And you call me one of them, do you?" said the girl, with a deep sigh.

"I call you one who has more of what makes up

happiness than any I have ever known. You are very beautiful — nay, no blushing, it is a woman says it — so handsome, May, that it is downright shame of Fortune to have made you rich, too. You should have been left to your beauty, as other people are left to their great connexions, or their talents, or their Three per Cents.; and then you are surrounded by those who love you, May — a very commendable thing in a world which has its share of disagreeable people; and, lastly, to enjoy all these fair gifts, you have got youth.”

“I shall be nineteen on the fourth of next month, Lucy,” said the other, gravely; “and it was just about that very circumstance that I came to speak to you.”

Mrs. Morris knew thoroughly well what the speech portended, but she looked all innocence and inquiry.

“You are aware, Lucy, what my coming of age brings with it?” said the girl, half pettishly.

“That you become a great millionnaire, dearest — a sort of female Rothschild, with funds and stocks in every land of the earth.”

“I was not speaking of money. I was alluding to the necessity of deciding as to my own fate in life. I told you that by my father’s will I am bound to declare that I accept or reject Charles Heathcote within six months after my coming of age.”

“I do not, I confess, see anything very trying in all that, May. I conclude that you know enough of your own mind to say whether you like him or not. You are not strangers to each other. You have been domesticated together —”

“That’s the very difficulty,” broke in May. “There has been intimacy between us, but nothing like affection — familiarity enough, but no fondness.”

"Perhaps that's not so bad a feature as you deem it," said the other, dryly. "Such a tame table-land prospect before marriage may all the better prepare you for the dull uniformity of wedded life."

May gave a slight sigh, and was silent, while the other continued:

"Being very rich, dearest, is, of course, a great resource, for you can, by the mere indulgence of your daily caprices, give yourself a sort of occupation, and a kind of interest in life."

May sighed again, and more heavily.

"I know this is not what one dreams of, my dear May," resumed she, "and I can well imagine how reluctant you are to seek happiness in toy terriers or diamond earrings; but remember what I told you once before was the great lesson the world taught us, that every joy we compass in this life is paid for dearly, in some shape or other, and that the system is one great scheme of compensations, the only wisdom being, to be sure you have got at last what you have paid for."

"I remember your having said that," said May, thoughtfully.

"Yes; it was in correction of a great mistake you had made, May, when you were deploring the fate of some one who had contracted an unequal marriage. It was then that I ventured to tell you, that what the world calls a misalliance is the one sure throw for a happy union."

"But you didn't convince me!" said May, hastily.

"Possibly not. I could not expect you to look on life from the same sad eminence I have climbed to; still I think you understood me when I showed you that as air and sunlight are blessings which we enjoy

without an effort, so affection, gained without sacrifice, elicits no high sense of self-esteem — none of that self-love, which is but the reflex of real love.”

“Charles would, then, according to your theory, be eminently happy in marrying *me*, for, to all appearance, the sacrifice would be considerable,” said May, with a half bitter laugh.

“*My* theory only applies to *us*, dear May; as for men, they marry from a variety of motives, all prompted by some one or other feature of their selfishness: this one for fortune, that for family influence, the other because he wants a home, and so on.”

“And not for love, at all?” broke in May.

“Alas, dearest, the man who affords himself the pleasure of being in love, is almost always unable to indulge in any other luxury. It is your tutor creature, there, like Layton, falls in love!”

May smiled, and turned away her head; but the crimson flush of her cheek soon spread over her neck, and Mrs. Morris saw it.

“Yes,” resumed she, as if reflecting aloud, “love is the one sole dissipation of these student men, and, so to say, it runs through the dull-coloured woof of their whole after-life, like a single gold thread glittering here and there at long intervals, and it gives them those dreamy fits of imaginative bliss which their quiet help-mates trustfully ascribe to some intellectual triumph. And it is in these the poor curate forgets his sermon, and the village doctor his patient, thinking of some moss-rose he had plucked long ago!”

“Do you believe that, Loo?” asked the girl, eagerly.

“I know it, dear; and, what’s more, it is these very men are the best of husbands, the kindest and the

tenderest. The perfume of an early love keeps the heart pure for many a long year after. Let us take Layton, for instance."

"But why Mr. Layton? What do we know about him?"

"Not much, certainly; but enough to illustrate our meaning. It is quite clear he is desperately in love."

"With whom, pray?" asked May. And her face became crimson as she spoke.

"With a young lady who cannot speak of him without blushing," said Mrs. Morris, calmly; and continued: "At first sight it does seem a very cruel thing to inspire such a man with a hopeless passion; yet, on second thought, we see what a stream of sunlight this early memory will throw over the whole bleak landscape of his after-life. You are his torture now, but you will be his benefactor in many a dark hour of the dreary pilgrimage before him. There will be touches of tenderness in that ode he'll send to the magazine; there will be little spots of sweet melancholy in that village story; men will never know whence they found their way into the curate's heart. How little aware are they that there's a corner there for old memories, embalmed amongst holier thoughts — a withered rose-leaf between the pages of a prayer-book!"

May again sighed, and with a tremor in the cadence that was almost a sob.

"So that," resumed the other, in a more flippant voice, "you can forgive yourself for your present cruelty, by thinking of all the benefits you are to bestow hereafter, and all this without robbing your rightful lord of one affection, one solitary emotion, he has just claim to. And that, my sweet May, is more than you can

do with your worldly wealth, for, against every cheque you send your banker, the cashier's book will retain the record."

"You only confuse me with all this," said May, pettishly. "I came for counsel."

"And I have given you more — I have given you consolation. I wish any one would be as generous with *me!*"

"Oh, you are not angry with me!" cried the girl, earnestly.

"Angry! no, dearest; a passing moment of selfish regret is not anger, but it is of *you*, not of *me*, I would speak; tell me everything. Has Charles spoken to you?"

"Not a word. It may be indifference, or it may be that, in a sense of security about the future, he does not care to trouble himself."

"Nay, scarcely that," said the other, thoughtfully.

"Whatever the cause, you will own it is not very flattering to *me*," said she, flushing deeply.

"And Mr. Layton — is *he* possessed of the same calm philosophy? Has he the same trustful reliance on destiny?" said Mrs. Morris, who, apparently examining the lace border of her handkerchief, yet stole a passing glance at the other's face.

"How can you ask such a question? What is *he* to *me*, or *I* to *him*? If he ever thought of me, besides, he must have remembered that the difference of station between us presents an insurmountable objection."

"As if Love asked for anything better," cried Mrs. Morris, laughingly. "Why, dearest, the passion thrives on insurmountable objections, just the way certain fish swallow stones, not for nutriment, but to aid digestion

by a difficulty. If he be the man I take him for, he must hug an obstacle to his heart as a Heaven-sent gift. Be frank with me, May," said she, passing her arm affectionately round her waist; "confess honestly that he told you as much."

"No; he never said that," muttered she, half reluctantly. "What he said was, that if disparity of condition was the only barrier between us — if he were sure, or if he could even hope, that worldly success could open an avenue to my heart —"

"That he'd go and be Prime Minister of England next session,

If doughty deeds
My lady please!

That was his tone, was it? Oh, dear! and I fancied the man had something new or original about him. Truth is, dearest, it is in love as in war — there are nothing but the same old weapons to fight with, and we are lost or won, just as our great-great-grandmothers were before us."

"I wish you would be serious, Lucy," said the girl, half rebukefully.

"Don't you know me well enough by this time to perceive that I am never more thoughtful than in what seems my levity? and this on principle, too, for, in the difficulties of life, Fancy will occasionally suggest a remedy Reason had never hit upon, just as sportsmen will tell you that a wild, untrained spaniel will often flush a bird a more trained dog had never 'marked.' And now, to be most serious, you want to choose between the eligible man who is sure of you, and the most unequal suitor who despairs of his success. Is not that your case?"

May shook her head dissentingly.

"Well, it is sufficiently near the issue, for our purpose. Not so? Come, then, I'll put it differently. You are balancing whether to refuse your fortune to Charles Heathcote or yourself to Alfred Layton; and my advice is, do both."

May grew very pale, and, after an effort to say something, was silent.

"Yes, dearest, between the man who never pledges to pay, and him who offers a bad promissory note, there is scant choice, and I'd say, take neither."

"I know how it will wound my dear old guardian, who loves me like a daughter," began May. But the other broke in:

"Oh! there are scores of things one can do in life to oblige one's friends, but marriage is not one of them. And then, bethink you, May, how little you have seen of the world; and surely there is a wider choice before you than between a wearied loungeur on half-pay and a poor tutor."

"Yes; a poor tutor if you will, but of a name and family the equal of my own," said May, hastily, and with a dash of temper in the words.

"Who says so? Who has told you that?"

"He himself. He told me that though there were some painful circumstances in his family history he would rather not enter upon, that in point of station he yielded to none in the rank of untitled gentry. He spoke of his father as a man of the very highest powers."

"Did he tell you what station he occupied at this moment?"

"No. And do you know it?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Morris, gravely.

"Will you not tell me, Lucy?" asked May, eagerly.

"No; there is not any reason that I should. You have just said, 'What is Mr. Layton to me, or I to him?' and in the face of such a confession why should I disparage him?"

"So, then, the confession would disparage him?"

"It might."

"This reserve is not very generous towards me, I must say," said the girl, passionately.

"It is from generosity to you that I maintain it," said the other, coldly.

"But if I were to tell you that the knowledge interests me deeply; that by it I may, possibly, be guided in a most eventful decision?"

"Oh, if you mean to say, 'Alfred Layton has asked me to marry him, and my reply depends upon what I may learn about his family and their station —'"

"No, no; I have not said that," burst in May.

"Not said, only implied it. Still, if it be what you desire me to entertain, I will have no concealments from you."

"I cannot buy your secret by a false pretence, Loo; there is no such compact as this between Layton and myself. Alfred asked me —"

"Alfred!" said Mrs. Morris, repeating the name after her, and with such a significance as sent all the colour to the girl's cheek and forehead — "Alfred! And what did Alfred ask you?"

"I scarcely know what I am saying," cried May, as she covered her face with her hands.

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Morris, tenderly, "I can find my way into your heart without your breaking it. Do not cry, dearest. I know as well all that he said as if I had overheard him saying it! The world has just its two kinds of suitors, the one who offers us marriage in a sort of grand princely fashion, and the other who, beseechingly proclaiming his utter unworthiness, asks us to wait — to wait for an uncle or a step-mother's death — to wait till he has got this place in the colonies, or that vicarage in Bleakshire — to wait till he has earned fame and honour, and Heaven knows what — till, in fact, he shall have won a wreath of laurel for his brows, and we have attained to a false plait for ours!" She paused a second or two to see if May would speak, but as she continued silent, Mrs. Morris went on: "There are few stock subjects people are more eloquent in condemning than what are called long engagements. There are some dozen of easy platitudes that every one has by heart on this theme; and yet, if the truth were to be told, it is the waiting is the best of it — the marriage is the mistake! That faint little flickering hope that lighted us on for years and years is extinguished at the church door, and never relighted after; so that, May, my advice to you is, never contract a long engagement until you have made up your mind not to marry at the end of it! My poor, poor child! why are you sobbing so bitterly? Surely I have said nothing to cause you sorrow?"

May turned away without speaking, but her heaving shoulders betrayed how intensely she was weeping.

"May I see him — may I speak with him, May?"

said Mrs. Morris, drawing her arm affectionately around her waist.

"To what end — with what view?" said the girl, suddenly, and almost haughtily.

"Now that you ask me in that tone, May, I scarcely know. I suppose I meant to show him how inconsiderate, how impossible, his hopes were; that there was nothing in his station or prospects that could warrant this presumption. I suppose I had something of this sort on my mind, but, I own to you now, your haughty glance has completely routed all my wise resolutions."

"Perhaps you speculated on the influence of that peculiar knowledge of his family history you appear to be possessed of?" said May, with some pique.

"Perhaps so," was the dry rejoinder.

"And which you do not mean to confide to *me*?" said the girl, proudly.

"I have not said so. So long as you maintained that Mr. Layton was to you nothing beyond a mere acquaintance, my secret, as you have so grandly called it, might very well rest in my own keeping. If, however, the time were come that he should occupy a very different place in your regard —"

"Instead of saying 'were come,' Loo, just say, 'If the time might come,'" said May, timidly.

"Well, then, 'if the time *might* come,' I *might* tell all that I know about him."

"But then it might be too late. I mean, it might come when it could only grieve, and not guide me."

"Oh, if I thought *that*, you should never know it! Be assured of one thing, May: no one ever less warred against the inevitable than myself. When I read, 'No

passage this way,' I never hesitate about seeking another road."

"And I mean to go mine, and without a guide either!" said May, moving towards the door.

"So I perceived some time back," was the dry reply of Mrs. Morris, as she busied herself with the papers before her.

"Good night, dear, and forgive my interruption," said May, opening the door.

"Good night, and delightful dreams to you," said Mrs. Morris, in her own most silvery accent. And May was gone.

The door had not well closed when Mrs. Morris was again, pen in hand, glancing rapidly over what she had written to catch up the clue. This was quickly accomplished, and she wrote away rapidly. It is not "in our brief" to read the letter; nor would it be "evidence;" enough, then, that we say it was one of those light, sparkling little epistles which are thrown off in close confidence, and in which the writer fearlessly touches any theme that offers. She sketched off the Heathcotes with a few easy graphic touches, giving a very pleasing portraiture of May herself, ending with these words:

"Add to all these attractions a large estate and a considerable sum in the funds, and then say, dear pa, is not this what Ludlow has so long been looking for? I am well aware of his pleasant habit of believing nothing, nor any one, so that you must begin by referring him to Doctors' Commons, where he can see the will. General Leslie died in 18—, and left Sir William Heathcote sole executor. When fully satisfied on the money question, you can learn anything

further from me that you wish; one thing only I stipulate for, and that is, to hold no correspondence myself with L. Of course, like as in everything else, he'll not put any faith in this resolution; but time will teach him at last. The negotiation must be confided to your own hands. Do not employ Collier, nor any one else. Be secret, and be speedy, for I plainly perceive the young lady will marry some one immediately after learning a disappointment now impending. Remember, my own conditions are: all the letters, and that we meet as utter strangers. I ask nothing more, I will accept nothing less. As regards Clara, he cannot, I suspect, make any difficulty; but that may be a question for ulterior consideration. Clara is growing up pretty, but has lost all her spirits, and will, in a few months more, look every day of her real age. I am sadly vexed about this; but it comes into the long category of the things to be endured."

The letter wound up with some little light and flippant allusions to her father's complaints about political ingratitude:

"I really do forget, dear papa, which are our friends; but surely no party would refuse your application for a moderate employment. The only creature I know personally amongst them is the Colonial Sec., and he says, 'They've left me nothing to give but the Bishoprics.' Better that, perhaps, than nothing; but could you manage to accept one? *that* is the question. There is an Irish M. P. here — a certain O'Shea — who tells me there are a variety of things to give in the West Indies, with what he calls wonderful pickings — meaning, I suppose, stealings. Why not look for one

of these? I'll question my friend the Member more closely, and give you the result.

"It was odd enough, a few months ago, O'S., never suspecting to whom he was talking, said, 'There was an old fellow in Ireland, a certain Nick Holmes, could tell more of Government rogueries and rascalities than any man living; and, if I were he, I'd make them give me the first good thing vacant, or I'd speak out.' Dear papa, having made so much out of silence, is it not worth while to think how much eloquence might be worth?"

"Your affectionate daughter,
"LUCY M."

CHAPTER XVI.

A Sick-Room.

It was a severe night of early winter — one of those stormy intervals in which Italy seems to assume all the rigours of some northern land, with an impetuosity derived from her own more excitable latitude. The rain beat against the windows with distinct and separate plashes, and the wind rattled and shook the strong walls with a violence that seemed irresistible.

In a large old room of a very old palace at Lucca, Alfred Layton walked to and fro, stopping every now and then to listen to some heightened effort of the gale without, and then resuming his lonely saunter. There were two large and richly ornamented fireplaces, and in one of them a small fire was burning, and close to this stood a table with a shaded lamp, and by these frail lights a little brightness was shed over this portion of the vast chamber, while the remainder was shrouded

in deep shadow. As the fitful flashes of the wood fire shone from time to time on the walls, little glimpses might be caught of a much-faded tapestry, representing some scenes from the *Æneid*; but on none of these did Layton turn an eye nor bestow a thought, for he was deep in sorrowful reflections of his own — cares too heavy to admit of any passing distraction. He was alone, for Agincourt had gone to spend the day at the "Caprini," whither Alfred would have accompanied him, but for a letter which the morning's post had brought to his hands, and whose contents had overwhelmed him with sorrow.

It was from his mother, written from a sick-bed, and in a hand that betokened the most extreme debility. And oh! what intense expression there is in these weak and wavering lines, wherein the letters seem to vibrate still with the tremulous motion of the fevered fingers! — what a deep significance do we attach to every word thus written! till at length, possessed of every syllable and every stop, we conjure up the scene where all was written, and feel as though we heard the hurried breathing of the sick-room. She had put off writing week after week, but now could defer no longer. It was upwards of two months since his father had left her to go to Dublin, and, from the day he went, she had never heard from him. A paragraph, however, in a morning paper, though not giving his name, unmistakably alluded to him as one who had grievously fallen from the high and honourable station he had once occupied, and spoke of the lamentable reverse that should show such a man in the dock of a police-court on the charge of insulting and libelling a public character in a ribald handbill. The prisoner was so

hopelessly sunk in drunkenness, it added, that he was removed from the court, and the examination postponed.

By selling one by one the little articles of furniture she had, she contrived hitherto to eke out a wretched support, and it was only when at last these miserable resources had utterly failed her that she was driven to grieve her son with her sad story. Nor was the least touching part of her troubles that in which she spoke of her straits, to avoid being considered an object of charity by her neighbours. The very fact of the Rector having overpaid for a few books he had purchased made her discontinue to send him others, so sensitive had misery made her. And yet, strangely enough, there did not exist the same repugnance to accept of little favours and trifling kindnesses from the poor people about her, of whom she spoke with a deep and affectionate gratitude. Her whole heart was, however, full of one thought and one hope — to see her dear son before she died. It was a last wish, and she felt as though indulging it had given her the energy which had prolonged her life. Doubts would cross her mind from time to time if it were possible for him to come — if he could be so far his own master as to be able to hasten to her — and even if doing so, he could be yet in time; but all these would give way before the strength of her hope.

“That I should see you beside my bed — that you should hold my hand as I go hence — will be happiness enough to requite me for much sorrow!” wrote she. “But if this may not be, and that we are to meet no more here, never forget that in my last prayer your

name was mingled, and that when I entreated forgiveness for myself, I implored a blessing for *you!*”

“That letter was written on the Monday before; and where had he been on that same Monday evening?” asked he of himself. “How had he been occupied in those same hours when she was writing this? Yes, that evening he was seated beside May Leslie at the piano, while she played and sang for him. They had been talking of German song-writers, and she was recalling here and there such snatches of Uhland and Schiller as she could remember; while Clara, leaning over the back of his chair, was muttering the words when May forgot them, and in an accent the purest and truest. What a happy hour was that to *him!* and to *her* how wretched — how inexpressibly wretched — as, alone and friendless, she wrote those faint lines!”

Poor Layton felt very bitterly the thought that, while he was living in an easy enjoyment of life, his mother, whom he loved dearly, should be in deep want and suffering.

In the easy carelessness of a disposition inherited from his father, he had latterly been spending money far too freely. His constant visits to Marlia required a horse, and then, with all a poor man's dread to be thought poor, he was ten times more liberal to servants than was called for, and even too ready to join in whatever involved cost or expense. Latterly, too, he had lost at play; small sums to be sure, but they were the small sums of a small exchequer, and they occurred every day, for, at the game of Pool, poor Layton's ball was always the first on the retired list; and the terrible Mr. O'Shea, who observed a sort of reserve

with Charles Heathcote, made no scruple of employing sharp practice with the tutor.

He emptied the contents of his purse on the table, and found that all his worldly wealth was a trifle over fifteen pounds, and of this he was indebted to Charles Heathcote some three or four — the losses of his last evening at the Caprini. What was to be done? A journey to Ireland would cost fully the double of all he possessed, not to say that, once there, he would require means. So little was he given to habits of personal indulgence, that he had nothing — absolutely nothing — to dispose of save his watch, and that was of little value; a few books, indeed, he possessed, but their worth, even if he could obtain it, would have been of no service. With these embarrassing thoughts of his poverty came also others, scarcely less fraught with difficulty. How should he relieve himself of his charge of Lord Agincourt? There would be no time to write to his guardians and receive their reply. He could not leave the boy in Italy; nor dare he, without the consent of his relatives, take him back to England. How to meet these difficulties he knew not, and time was pressing — every hour of moment to him. Was there one, even one, whose counsel he could ask, or whose assistance he could bespeak? He ran over the names of those around him, but against such, in turn, some insuperable objection presented itself. There possibly had been a time he might have had recourse to Sir William, frankly owning how he was circumstanced, and bespeaking his aid for the moment; but of late the old Baronet's manner towards him had been more cold and reserved than at first — studiously courteous, it is true, but a courtesy that excluded intimacy. As to

Charles, they had never been really friendly together, and yet there was a familiarity between them that made a better understanding more remote than ever.

While he revolved all these troubles in his head, he walked up and down his room with the feverish impatience of one to whom rest was torture. At last, even the house seemed too narrow for his restless spirit, and, taking his hat, he went out, careless of the swooping rain, nor mindful of the cold and cutting wind as it swept down from the last spur of the Apennines. As the chill rain drenched him, there seemed almost a sense of relief in the substitution of a bodily suffering to the fever that burned in his brain, and seeking out the bleakest part of the old ramparts, he stood breasting the storm, which had now increased to a perfect hurricane.

"The rain cannot beat upon one more friendless and forlorn," muttered he, as he stood shivering there; the strange fascination of misery suggesting a sort of bastard heroism to his spirit. "The humblest peasant in that dreary Campagna has more of sympathy and kindness than I have. He has those poor as himself and powerless to aid, but willing to befriend him." There was even in his days of depression a fierce revolt in his nature against the position he occupied in the world. The acceptance on sufferance, the recognition accorded to his pupil being his only claim to attention, were painful wounds to a haughty temperament, and, with the ingenuity of a self-tormentor, he ascribed every reverse he met in life to his false position. He accepted it, no doubt, to be able to help those who had made such sacrifices for him, and yet even in this it was a failure. There lay his poor mo-

ther, dying of very want, in actual destitution, and he could not help — could not even be with her!

Though his wet clothes, now soaked with half-frozen drift, sent a deadly chill through him, the fever of his blood rendered him unconscious of it, and his burning brain seemed to defy the storm, while in the wild raging of the elements he caught up a sort of excitement that sustained him. For more than two hours he wandered about in that half-frenzied state, and at length, benumbed and exhausted, he turned homeward. To his surprise, he perceived, as he drew near, that the windows were all alight, and the red glow of a large wood fire sent its mellow glare across the street; but greater was his astonishment on entering to see the tall figure of a man stretched at full length on three chairs before the fire, fast asleep, a carpet-bag and a travelling-cloak beside him.

Never was Layton less disposed to see a stranger and play the host to any one, and he shook the sleeper's shoulder in a fashion that speedily awoke him; who, starting up with a bound, cried out, "Well, Britisher, I must say this is a kinder droll way to welcome a friend."

"Oh, Colonel, is it you?" said Layton. "Pray forgive my rudeness. But coming in as I did, without expecting any one, wet and somewhat tired —" He stopped and looked vacantly about him, as though not clearly remembering where he was.

Quackinboss had, however, been keenly examining him while he spoke, and marked in his wildly excited eyes and flushed cheeks the signs of some high excitement. "You ain't noways right; you're wet through,

and cold besides," said he, taking his hand in both his own. "Do you feel ill?"

"Yes; that is — I feel as if — I — had — lost my way," muttered he, with long pauses between the words.

"There's nothing like bed and a sound sleep for that," said the other, gently; while, taking Layton's arm, he led him quietly along towards the half-open door of his bedroom. Passively surrendering himself to the other's care, Alfred made no resistance to all he dictated, and, removing his dripping clothes, he got into bed.

"It is here the most pain is now," said he, placing his palm on his temple, "here, and inside my head."

"I wish I could talk to that servant of yours; he don't seem a very bright sort of creetur, but I could make him of use." With this muttered remark, Quackinboss walked back into the sitting-room, where Layton's man was now extinguishing the lights and the fire. "You have to keep that fire in, I say — fire — great fire — hot water. Understand me?"

"'Strissimo! si," said the Tuscan, bowing courteously.

"Well, then, do you fetch some lemons — lemons. You know lemons, don't you?"

A shrug was the unhappy reply.

"Lemong — lemong! You know *them*?"

"Limoni! oh si!" And he made the sign of squeezing them; and then, hastening out of the room, he speedily reappeared with lemons and other necessities to concoct a drink.

"That's it — bravo, that's it! Brew it right hot, my worthy fellow," said Quackinboss, with a gesture that implied the water was to be boiled immediately.

He now returned to Layton, whom he found sitting up in the bed, talking rapidly to himself, but with all the distinctness of one perfectly collected.

"By Marseilles I could reach Paris on Tuesday night, and London on Wednesday. Isn't there a daily packet for Genoa?" asked he, as Quackinboss entered.

"Well, I guess there's more than's good of 'em," drawled out the other; "ill-found, ill-manned, dirty craft as ever I put foot in!"

"Yes, but they leave every day, don't they?" asked Layton, impatiently.

"I ain't posted up in their doin's, nor I don't want to, that's a fact. We went ashore with a calm sea and a full moon, coming up from Civita-Vecchia —"

Layton burst into a laugh at the strange pronunciation — a wild, unearthly sort of laugh that ended in a low, faint sigh, after which he lay back like one exhausted.

"I'm a goin' to take a little blood from you, I am!" said Quackinboss, producing a lancet which, from its shape and size, seemed more conversant with horse than human practice.

"I'll not be bled! How am I to travel a journey of seven, eight, or ten days and nights, if I'm bled?" cried the sick man, angrily.

"I've got to bleed you, and I'll do it!" said Quackinboss, as, taking out his handkerchief, he tore a long strip, like a ribbon, from its border.

"Francesco — Francesco!" screamed out Layton, wildly, "take this man away; he has no right to be here. I'll not endure it. Leave me — go — leave me!" screamed he, angrily.

There was that peculiar something about the look

of Quackinboss that assured Francesco it would be as well not to meddle with him; and, like all his countrymen, he was quick to read an expression and profit by his knowledge. Even to the sick man, too, did the influence extend, and the determinate, purpose-like tone of his manner enforced obedience without even an effort.

"I was mystery-man for three years among the Choctaws," said he, as he bound up Layton's arm, "and I'll yield to no one livin' how to treat a swamp fever, and that's exactly what you've got." While the blood trickled from the open vein he continued to talk on in the same strain. "I've seen a red man anoint himself all over with oil, and set fire to it, and then another stood by with a great blanket to wrap him up afore he was more than singed, and it always succeeded in stoppin' the fever. It brought it out to the surface like. Howsomever, it's only an Indian's fixin', and I don't like it with a white man. How d'ye feel now — better?"

A muttering, dissatisfied sound, but half articulate, seemed to say, "No better."

"It ain't to be expected yet," said Quackinboss. "Lie down, and be quiet a bit."

Although the first effect of the bleeding seemed to calm the sufferer and arrest his fever, the symptoms of the malady came back in full force afterwards, and, ere day broke, he was raving wildly. At one moment he fancied he was at work in the laboratory with his father, and he ran over great calculations of mental arithmetic with a marvellous volubility; then he was back in his chambers at Trinity, but he could not find his books; they were gone — lost — no, not lost, he

suddenly remembered that he had sold them — sold them to send a pittance to his poor sick mother. “It’s a sad story, every part of it,” whispered he in Quack-inboss’s ear, while he clutched him closely with his hands. “It was a great man was lost, mark you; and in a great shipwreck even the fragments of the wreck work sad destruction, and of course none will say a word for him. But remember, Sir, I am his son, and will not hear a syllable against him, from you nor any other.” From this he abruptly broke off to speak of O’Shea, and his late altercation with him. “I waited at home all the morning for him, and at last got a note to say that he had forgotten to tell me of an appointment he had made to ride out with Miss Leslie, but he’ll be punctual to the hour to-morrow. So it’s better as it is, Colonel, for you’ll be here, and can act as my friend — won’t you? Your countrymen understand all these sort of things so well. And then, if I be called away suddenly to England, don’t tell them,” whispered he, mysteriously — “don’t tell them at the Villa whither I’ve gone: they know nothing of me nor of my family — never heard of my ruined father, nor my poor, sick, destitute mother, dying of actual want — think of that — while I was playing the man of fortune here, affecting every extravagance — yes, it was you yourself said so; I overheard you in the garden, asking why, or how was it, with such ample means, I would become a tutor.”

It was not alone that these words were uttered in a calm and collected tone, but they actually recalled to the American a remark he had once made about Layton. “Well,” said he, as if some apology was

called for, "it warn't any business of mine, but I was sorry to see it."

"But you didn't know — you couldn't know," cried the other, eagerly, "that I had no choice; my health was breaking. I had overworked my head; I couldn't go on. Have you ever tried what it is to read ten hours a day? Answer me that."

"No; but I've been afoot sixteen out of the twenty-four, for weeks together, on an Indian trail; and that's considerable worse, I take it."

"Who cares for mere fatigue of body?" said Layton, contemptuously.

"And who says it's mere fatigue of body?" rejoined the other, "when every sense a man has is strained and stretched to breakin', his ear to the earth, and his eyes rangin' over the swell of the prairies, till his brain aches with the strong effort; for, mark ye, Choctaws isn't Pawnees: they're on you with a swoop, just like a white squall in the summer time." There is no saying how far Quackinboss, notwithstanding all his boasted skill in physic, might have been tempted to talk on about a theme he loved so well, when he was suddenly admonished, by the expression of Layton's face, that the sick man was utterly unconscious of all around him. The countenance had assumed that peculiar stern and stolid gaze which is so markedly the characteristic of an affected brain.

"There," muttered Quackinboss to himself, "I've been a talkin' all this time to a poor creetur as is ravin' mad — all I've been doin' is to make him worse."

CHAPTER XVII.

A Master and Man.

WHO owns the smart tandem that trips along so flippantly over the slightly frosted road from the Bagni towards Lucca? What genius, cunning in horseflesh, put that spicy pair together, perfect matches as they are in all but colour, for the wheeler is a blood chestnut, and the leader a bright grey, with bone and substance enough for hunters? they have a sort of lithe and wiry action that reminds one of the Hungarian breed, and so, indeed, a certain jaunty carriage of the head, and half wild-looking expression of the eye, bespeak them. The high dog-cart, however, is unmistakably English, as well as the harness, with its massive mountings and broad straps. What an air of mingled elegance and solidity pervades the entire. It is, as it were, all that such an equipage can pretend to compass — lightness, speed, and a dash of sporting significance, being its chief characteristics.

It is not necessary to present you to the portly gentleman who holds the ribbons, all encased as he is in box-coats and railway wrappers; you can still distinguish Mr. O'Shea, and as unmistakably recognise his man Joe beside him. The morning is sharp, clear, and frosty, but so perfectly still, that the blue smoke of Mr. O'Shea's cigar hangs floating in the air behind him, as the nimble nags spin along at something slightly above thirteen miles an hour. Joe, too, solaces himself with the bland weed, but in more primitive fashion, from a short "dudeen" of native origin: his hat is pressed down firmly over his brows, and his

hands, even to the wrists, deeply encased in his pockets, for Joe, be it owned, is less amply supplied with woollen comforts than his master, and feels the morning sharp.

"Now, I call this a very neat turn-out; the sort of thing a man might not be ashamed to tool along through any town in Europe," said O'Shea.

"You might show it in Sackville-street!" said Joe, proudly.

"Sackville-street?" rejoined O'Shea, in an accent of contemptuous derision. "Is there any use, I wonder, in bringing you all over the world?"

"There is not," said the other, in his most dogged manner.

"If there was," continued O'Shea, "you'd know that Dublin had no place amongst the great cities of Europe — that nobody went there — none so much as spoke of it. I'd just as soon talk of Macroom in good society."

"And why wouldn't you talk of Macroom? What's the shame in it?" asked the inexorable Joe.

"There would be just the same shame as if I was to bring you along with me when I was asked out to dinner!"

"You might do worse," was the dry reply.

"I'm curious to hear how."

"Troth, you might; and easy, too," said Joe, sententiously.

These slight passages did not seem to invite conversation, and so, for above a mile or two, nothing was spoken on either side. At last Mr. O'Shea said:

"I think that grey horse has picked up a stone; he goes tenderly near side."

"He does not; he goes as well as you do," was Joe's answer.

"You're as blind as a bat, or you'd see he goes lame," said O'Shea, drawing up.

"There, he's thrown it now; it was only a bit of a pebble," said Joe, as though the victory was still on his side.

"Upon my life, I wonder why I keep you at all," burst out O'Shea, angrily.

"So do I; and I wonder more why I stay."

"Does it never occur to you to guess why?"

"No; never."

"It has nothing to say to being well fed, well lodged, well paid, and well cared for?"

"No; it has not," said Joe, gravely; "the bit I ate I get how I can; these is my own clothes, and sorrow sixpence I seen o' your money since last Christmas."

"Get down — get down on the road this instant. You shall never sit another mile beside me."

"I will not get down. Why would I, in a strange counthry, and not a farthin' in my pocket!"

"Have a civil tongue, then, and don't provoke me to turn you adrift on the world."

"I don't want to provoke you."

"What beastly stuff is that you are smoking?" said O'Shea, as a whole cloud from Joe's pipe came wafted across him.

"'Tisn't bastely at all. I took it out of your own bag this morning."

"Not out of the antelope's skin?" asked O'Shea, eagerly.

"Yes; out of the hairy bag with the little hoofs on it."

A loud burst of laughter was O'Shea's reply, and, for several seconds, he could not control his mirth.

"Do you know what you're smoking? It's Russian camomile!"

"May be it is."

"I got it to make a bitter mixture."

"It's bitther, sure enough, but it has a notion of tobacco, too."

O'Shea again laughed out, and longer than before.

"It's just a chance that you weren't poisoned," said he at last. "Here — here's a cigar for you, and a real Cuban, too, one that young Heathcote never fancied would grace your lips."

Joe accepted the boon without acknowledgment; indeed, he scrutinised the gift with an air of half-depreciation.

"You don't seem to think much of a cigar," said O'Shea, testily.

"When I can get no betther," said Joe, biting off the end.

O'Shea frowned and turned away. It was evident that he had some difficulty in controlling himself, but he succeeded, and was silent. The effort, however, could not be sustained very long, and at last he said, but in a slow and measured tone.

"Shall I tell you a home-truth, Master Joe?"

"Yes, if you like."

"It is this, then: it is that same ungracious and ungrateful way with which you, and every one like you in Ireland, receive benefits, disgusts every stranger."

"Benefits!"

"Yes, benefits — I said benefits."

"Sure, what's our own isn't benefits," rejoined Joe, calmly.

"Your own? May I ask if the contents of that bag were your own?"

"'Tis at the devil I'm wishin' it now," said Joe, putting his hand on his stomach. "'Tis tearin' me to pieces, it is, bad luck to it!"

O'Shea was angry, but such was the rueful expression of Joe's face that he laughed out again.

"Now he's goin' lame, if you like!" cried Joe, with a tone of triumph that said, "All the mishaps are not on *my* side."

O'Shea pulled up, and knowing, probably, the utter inutility of employing Joe at such a moment, got down himself to see what was amiss.

"No, it's the off leg," cried Joe, as his master was carefully examining the near one.

"I suppose he must have touched the frog on a sharp stone," said O'Shea, after a long and fruitless exploration.

"I don't think so," said Joe; "'tis more like to be a dizaze of the bone — one of thim dizazes of the fet-lock that's never cured."

A deeply uttered malediction was O'Shea's answer to the pleasant prediction.

"I never see one of them recover," resumed Joe, who saw his advantage; "but the baste will do many a day's slow work — in a cart."

"Hold your prate, and be hanged to you!" muttered O'Shea, as between anger and stooping, he was threatened with a small apoplexy. "Move them on gently for a few yards, till I get a look at him."

Joe leisurely moved into his master's place, and bestowed the rug very comfortably around his legs. This done, with a degree of detail and delay that seemed almost intended to irritate, he next slowly arranged the reins in his fingers, and then, with a jerk of his whip-hand, sending out the lash in a variety of curves, he brought the whipcord down on the leader with a "nip" that made him plunge, while the wheeler, understanding the hint, started off at full swing. So sudden and unexpected was the start, that O'Shea had barely time to spring out of the way to escape the wheel. Before, indeed, he had thoroughly recovered his footing, Joe had swept past a short turning of the road, leaving nothing but a light train of dust to mark his course.

"Stop! pull up! stop! confound you!" cried O'Shea, with other little expletives that print is not called on to repeat, and then, boiling with passion, he set off in pursuit. When he had gained the angle of the road, it was only to catch one look at his equipage as it disappeared in the distance: the road dipping suddenly showed him little more than a torso of the "faithful Joe," diminishing rapidly to a head, and then vanishing entirely.

"What a scoundrel! what a rascal!" cried O'Shea, as he wiped his forehead; and then, with his fist clenched and upraised, "registered a vow," as Mr. O'Connell used to say, of unlimited vengeance. If this true history does not record the full measure of the heart-devouring anger of O'Shea, it is not from any sense of its being undeserved or unreasonable, for, after all, worthy reader, it might have pushed even *your* patience to have been left standing, of a sharp November

morning, on a lonely road, while your carriage was driven off by an insolent "flunkey."

As he was about midway between the Bagni and the town of Lucca, to which he was bound, he half hesitated whether to go on or to return. There was shame in either course. Shame in going back to recount his misadventure; shame in having to call Joe to a reckoning in Lucca before a crowd of strangers, and that vile population of the stable-yard, with which doubtless, Joe would have achieved popularity before his master could arrive.

Of a verity the situation was embarrassing, and in his muttered comments upon it might be read how thoroughly his mind took in every phase of its difficulty. "How they'll laugh at me up at the Villa. It will last Sir William for the winter; he'll soon hear how I won the trap from his son, and he'll be ready with the old saw, 'Ah! ill got, ill gone!' How young Heathcote will enjoy it; and the widow — if she be a widow — won't she caricature me, as I stand halloaing out after the runaway rascal? Very hard to get out of all this ridicule without something serious to cover it. That's the only way to get out of a laughable adventure; so, Master Layton, it's all the worse for *you* this morning." In this train of thought was he deeply immersed as a peasant drove past in his light "calesina." O'Shea quickly hailed the man, and bargained with him for a seat to Lucca.

Six weary miles of a jolting vehicle did not contribute much to restore his calm of mind, and it was in a perfect frenzy of anger he walked into the inn-yard, where he saw his carriage now standing. In the stables his horses stood, sheeted up, but still dirty and travel-

stained. Joe was absent. "He had been there five minutes ago — he was not an instant gone — he had never left his horses till now — taken such care of them — watered, fed, groomed, and clothed them — he was a treasure — there was not his like to be found." These, and such-like, were the eulogies universally bestowed by the stable constituency upon one whom O'Shea was at the same time consigning in every form to the infernal gods! The grooms and helpers wore a half grin on their faces as he passed out, and again he muttered, "All the worse for *you*, Layton; *you'll* have to pay the reckoning."

He was not long in finding the Barsotti Palace, where Layton lodged; an old tumble-down place it was, with a grass-grown, mildewed court, and some fractured statues, green with damp, around it. The porter, indicating with a gesture of his thumb where the stranger lived, left O'Shea to plod up the stairs alone.

It was strange enough that it should then have occurred to him, for the first time, that he had no definite idea about what he was coming. Layton and he had, it is true, some words, and Layton had given him time and place to continue the theme; but in what way? To make Layton reiterate in cold blood something he might have uttered in anger, and would probably retract, if called upon courteously: this would be very poor policy. While, on the other hand, to permit him to insinuate anything on the score of his success at play might be even worse again. It was a case for very nice management, and so O'Shea thought, as, after arriving at a door bearing Layton's name on a visiting-card, he took a turn in the lobby to consider his course of proceeding. The more he thought over it, the more

difficult he found it; in fact, at last he saw it to be one of those cases in which the eventuality alone can decide the line to take, and so he gave a vigorous pull at the bell, determined to begin the campaign at once.

The door was not opened immediately, and he repeated his summons still louder. Scarcely had the rope quitted his hand, however, when a heavy bolt was drawn back, the door was thrown wide, and a tall athletic man, in shirt and trousers, stood before him.

"Well, stranger, you arn't much distressed with patience, that's a fact," said a strongly nasal accent, while the speaker gave a look of very fierce defiance at the visitor.

"Am I speaking to Colonel Quackinboss?" asked O'Shea, in some surprise.

"Well, Sir, if it ain't him, it's some one in *his* skin, I'm thinkin'."

"My visit was to Mr. Layton," said the other, stiffly. "Is he at home?"

"Yes, Sir; but he's not a goin' to see you."

"I came here by his appointment."

"That don't change matters a red cent, stranger; and as I said a'ready, he ain't a goin' to see you."

"Oh, then I'm to understand that he has placed himself in *your* hands? You assume to act for him?" said O'Shea, stiffly.

"Well, if you like to take it from that platform I'll offer no objection," said Quackinboss, gravely.

"Am I, or am I not, to regard you as his friend on this occasion?" said O'Shea, authoritatively.

"I'll tell you a secret, stranger: you'll not be your own friend if you don't speak to me in another tone of voice. I ain't used to be halloaed at, I ain't."

"One thing at a time, Sir," said O'Shea. "When I have finished the business which brought me here, I shall be perfectly at your service."

"Now I call that talkin' reasonable. Step inside, Sir, and take a seat," said Quackinboss, whose manner was now as calm as possible.

Whatever irritation O'Shea really felt, he contrived to subdue it in appearance, as he followed the other into the room.

O'Shea was not so deficient in tact that he could not see his best mode of dealing with the American was to proceed with every courtesy and deference, and so, as he seated himself opposite him, he mentioned the reason of his coming there without anything like temper, and stated that from a slight altercation such a difference arose as required either an explanation or a meeting.

"He can't go a shooting with you, stranger; he's struck down this morning," said Quackinboss, gravely, as the other finished.

"Do you mean he's ill?"

"I s'pose I do, when I said he was down, Sir."

"This is most unfortunate," broke in O'Shea. "My duties as a public man require my being in England next week. I hoped to have settled this little matter before my departure. I see nothing for it but to beg you will, in writing — a few lines will suffice — corroborate the fact of my having presented myself here, according to appointment, and mention the sad circumstances by which our intentions, for I believe I may speak of Mr. Layton's as my own, have been frustrated."

"Well now, stranger, we are speakin' in confidence

here, and I may just as well observe to you that, of all the weapons that fit a man's hands, a pen is the one I'm least ready with. I'm indifferent good with fire-arms, or a bowie, but a pen, you see, cuts the fingers that hold it, just as often as it hurts the enemy, and I don't like it."

"But surely, where the object is merely to testify to a plain matter of fact —"

"There ain't no such things on the 'arth as plain matters of fact, Sir," broke in Quackinboss, eagerly. "I've come to the middle period of life, and I never met one of 'em!"

O'Shea made a slight, very slight, movement of impatience at these words, but the other remarked it, and said,

"We'll come to that presently, Sir. Let us just post up this account of Mr. Layton's, first of all."

"I don't think there is anything further to detain me here," said O'Shea, rising with an air of stiff politeness.

"Won't you take something, Sir—won't you liquor?" asked Quackinboss, calmly.

"Excuse me; I never do of a morning."

"I'm sorry for it. I was a thinkin', maybe, you'd warm up a bit with a glass of something strong. I was a hopin' it's the cold of the day chilled you!"

"Do you mean this for insult, Sir?" said O'Shea. "I ask you, because, really, your use of the English language is of a kind to warrant the question."

"That's where I wanted to see you, Sir. You're coming up to a good boilin' point now, stranger," said Quackinboss, with a pleased look.

"Is he mad — is he deranged?" muttered O'Shea, half aloud.

"No, Sir. We Western men are little liable to insanity; our lives are too much abroad and open-air lives for that. It's your thoughtful, reflective, deep, men, as wears a rut in their mind with thinkin', them's the fellows goes mad."

O'Shea's stare of astonishment at this speech scarcely seemed to convey a concurrence in the assertion, and he made a step towards the door.

"If you're a goin', I've nothing more to say, Sir," said Quackinboss.

"I cannot see what there is to detain me here!" said the other, sternly.

"There ain't much, that's a fact," was the cool reply. "There's nothing remarkable in them bottles; it's new brandy and British gin; and, as for myself, Sir, I can only say I must give you a bill payable at sight — whenever we may meet again, I mean — for just now this young man here can't spare me. I'm his nurse, you see. I hope you understand me?"

"I believe I do."

"Well, that's all right, stranger, and here's my hand on't." And even before O'Shea was well aware, the other had taken his hand in his strong grasp and was shaking it heartily. O'Shea found it very hard not to laugh outright, but there was a meaning-like determination in the American's manner that showed it was no moment for mirth. It was, however, necessary to say something to relieve a very awkward pause, and so he observed,

"I hope Mr. Layton's illness is not a serious one. I saw him, as I thought, perfectly well two days back."

"He's main bad, Sir — very sick — very sick indeed."

"You have a doctor, I suppose?"

"No, Sir. I have some experience myself, and I'm just a treatin' him by what I picked up among people that have very few apothecaries — the Mandan Indians."

"Without being particular, I must own I'd prefer a more civilised course of physic," said O'Shea, with a faint smile.

"Very likely, stranger; and if you had a dispute, you'd rather, mayhap, throw it into a law court, and leave it to three noisy fellows to quarrel over; while I'd look out for two plain fellows, with horny hands and honest hearts, and say, 'What's the rights o' this, gentlemen?'"

"I wish you every success, I'm sure," said O'Shea, bowing.

"The same to you, Sir," said the other, in a sing-song tone. "Good-by."

When O'Shea had reached the first landing, he stopped, and, leaning against the wall, laughed heartily. "I hope I'll be able to remember all he said," muttered he, as he fancied himself amusing some choice company by as personation of the Yankee. "The whole thing was as good as a play! But," added he, after a pause, "I'm not sorry it's over, and that I have done with him!" Very true and heartfelt was this last reflection of the Member for Inch — a far more honest recognition than even the hearty laugh he had just enjoyed — and then there came an uneasy after thought, that asked, "What could he mean by talking of a long bill, payable at some future opportunity? Surely he can't imagine

that we're to renew all this if we ever meet again. No, no, Colonel, your manners and your medicine may be learned amongst the Mandans, but they won't do here with us!" And so he issued into the street, not quite reassured, but somewhat more comforted.

So occupied was his mind with the late scene, that he had walked fully half way back to his inn ere he bestowed a thought upon Joe. Wise men were they who suggested that the sentence of a prisoner should not immediately follow the conclusion of his trial, but ensue after the interval of some two or three days. In the impulse of a mind fully charged with a long narrative of guilt there is a force that seeks its expansion in severity; whereas in the brief respite of even some hours, there come doubts, and hesitations, and regrets, and palliations. In a word, a variety of considerations unadmitted before find entrance now to the mind, and are suffered to influence it.

Now, though Mr. O'Shea's first and not very unnatural impulse was to give Joe a sound thrashing and then discharge him, the interval we have just described moderated considerably the severity of this resolve. In the first place, although the reader may be astonished at the assertion, Joe was one very difficult to replace, since, independently of his aptitude to serve as groom, valet, or cook, he was deeply versed in all the personal belongings of his master. He had been with him through long years of difficulty, and aided him in various ways, from corrupting the virtuous freeholders of Inchabogue to raising an occasional supply on the rose-amethyst ring. Joe had fought for him and lied for him, with a zealous devotion not to be forgotten. Not, indeed, that he loved his master

more, but that he liked the world less, and Joe found a sincere amount of pleasure in seeing how triumphantly their miserable pretensions swayed and dominated over mankind. And, lastly, he had another attribute, not to be undervalued in an age like ours — he had no wages! It is not to be understood that he served O'Shea out of some sense of heroic devotion or attachment: no; Joe lived, as they say in India, on "loot." When times were prosperous — that is, when billiards and blind-hookey smiled, and his master's pockets came home small Californias of half-crowns and even sovereigns, Joe prospered also. He drank boldly and freely from the cup when brimful, but the half-empty goblet he only sipped at: when seasons of pressure set in, Joe's existence was maintained by some inscrutable secret of his own; for, be it known, that on O'Shea's arrival at an hotel, his almost first care was to announce, "You will observe my servant is on board wages; he pays for himself;" and Joe would corroborate the myth with a bow. Bethink yourself, good reader, had you been the member for Inch, it might have been a question whether to separate from such a follower.

By the fluctuation of O'Shea's fortunes, Joe's whole conduct seemed moulded: when the world went well with his master, his manner grew somewhat almost respectful; let the times grow worse, Joe became indifferent; a shade lower and he was familiar and insolent; and, by long habit, O'Shea had come to recognise these changes as part of the condition of a varying fortune.

Little wonder was it that Joe grew to speak of his master and himself as one, complaining, as he

would, "We never got sixpence out of our property. 'Tis the ruin of us paying that annuity to our mother;" and so on.

Now these considerations, and many others like them, weighed deeply on O'Shea's mind as he entered the room of the hotel, angry and irritated, doubtless, but far from decided as to how he should manifest it. Indeed, the deliberation was cut short, for there stood Joe before him.

"I thought I was never to see your face again," said O'Shea, scowling at him. "How dare you have the insolence to appear before me?"

"Isn't it well for you that I'm alive? Ain't you lucky that you're not answering for my death this minute?" said the other, boldly. "And if I didn't drive like blazes, would I be here now? Appear before you, indeed! I'd like to know who you'd be appearin' before, if I was murdered with them bitters you gave me?"

"Lying scoundrel! you think to turn it all off in this manner. You commit a theft first, and if the offence had killed you, it's no more than you deserved. Who told you to steal the contents of that bag, Sir?"

"The devil, I suppose, for I never felt pain like it — twistin', and tearin', and torturin' me, as if you had a pinchers in my inside, and were nippin' me to pieces!"

"I'm glad of it — heartily glad of it."

"I know you are — I know you well. 'Tis a corpse you'd like to see me this minute."

"So that I never set eyes on you, I don't care what becomes of you."

"That's enough — enough said. I'm goin'."

"Go, and be ——!"

"No I won't. I'll go and earn my livin'; and I'll have my carakter, too — eleven years last Lady-day; and I'll be paid back to my own counthry; and I'll have my wages up to Saturday next; and the docther's bill, here, for all the stuff I tuk since I came in; and when you are ready with all this, you can ring for me." And with his hands clasped over his stomach, and in a half-bent position, Joe shuffled out and left his master to his own reflections.

The world is full of its strange vicissitudes, and in nothing more remarkably than the way people are reconciled, ignore the past, and start afresh in life to incur more disagreements, and set to bickering again. Great kings and kaisers indulge in this pastime; profound statesmen and politicians do very little else: what wonder, then, if the declining sun saw the smart tandem slipping along towards the Bagni, with the O'Shea and his man sitting side by side in pleasant converse! They were both smoking, and seemed like men who enjoyed their picturesque drive, and the inspiriting pace they travelled at.

"When I'll singe these 'cat hairs' off, and trim him a little about the head, he'll look twice as well," said Joe, with his eye on the leader. "It's a pity to see a collar on him."

"We'll take him down to Rome, and show him off over the hurdles," said his master, joyfully.

"I was just thinkin' of that this minute; wasn't that strange, now?"

"We'll have to go, for they're going to break up house here, and go off to Rome for the winter."

"How will we settle with Pan?" said Joe, thoughtfully.

"A bill, I suppose."

Joe shook his head doubtingly. "I'm afraid not."

"Go I will, and go I must," said O'Shea, resolutely. "I'm not going to lose the best chance I ever had in life for the sake of a beggarly innkeeper."

"Why would you? Sure, no one would ask you! For, after all, 'tis only drivin' away, if we're put to it. I don't think he'd overtake us."

"Not if we went the same pace you did this morning, Joe," said O'Shea, laughing; and Joe joined pleasantly in the laugh, and the event ceased to be a grievance from that instant.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Mrs. Morris as Counsellor.

THE breakfast at the Villa Caprini always seemed to recal more of English daily life and habit than any other event of the day. It was not only in the luxuriously spread table, and the sideboard arrayed with that picturesque profusion so redolent of home, but there was that gay and hearty familiarity so eminently the temper of the hour, and that pleasant interchange of news and gossip, as each tore the envelope of his letter, or caught some amusing paragraph in his paper.

Mrs. Penthy Morris had a very wide correspondence, and usually contributed little scraps of intelligence from various parts of the Continent. They were generally the doings and sayings of that cognate world,

whose names require no introduction, and even those to whom they are unfamiliar would rather hear in silence than own to the ignorance. The derelicts of fashion are the staple of small-talk; they are suggestive of all the little social smartness one hears, and of that very Brummagem morality which assumes to judge them. In these Mrs. Morris revelled. No paragraph of the *Morning Post* was too mysteriously worded for her powers of interpretation; no asterisks could veil a name from her piercing gaze. Besides, she had fashioned a sort of algebraic code of life which wonderfully assisted her divination, and being given an unhappy marriage, she could foretell the separation, or, with the data of a certain old gentleman's visits to St. John's-wood, could predict his will with an accuracy that seemed marvellous. As she sat, surrounded with letters and notes of all sizes, she varied the tone of her intelligence so artfully as to canvass the suffrage of every listener. Now it was some piece of court gossip, some "scandal of Queen Elizabeth," now a curious political intrigue, and now, again, some dashing exploit of a young soldier in India. But whether it told of good or evil fortune, of some deeply interesting event, or some passing triviality, her power of narrating it was considerable, as, with a tact all her own, she selected some one especial individual as chief listener. After a number of short notices of London, Rome, and Paris, she tossed over several letters carelessly, saying,

"I believe I have given you the cream of my correspondence. Stay, here is something about your old sloop the *Mosquito*, Lord Agincourt; would you like to hear of how she attacked the forts at the mouth of the — oh, how shall I attack it? — the Bhageebhahoo?

This is a midshipman's letter, written the same evening of the action."

Though the question was addressed very pointedly, the boy never heard it, but sat deeply engaged in deciphering a very jagged handwriting in a letter before him. It was one of those scratchy, unfinished specimens of penmanship which are amongst the luxuries persons of condition occasionally indulge in. Seeing his preoccupation, Mrs. Morris did not repeat her question, but suffered him to pursue his researches undisturbed. He had just begun his breakfast when the letter arrived, and now he ceased to eat anything, but seemed entirely engrossed by his news. At last, he arose abruptly, and left the room.

"I hope Agincourt has not got any bad tidings," said Sir William; "he seems agitated and uneasy."

"I saw his guardian's name — Sommerville — on the envelope," said Mrs. Morris. "It is, probably, one of those pleasant epistles which wards receive quarterly to remind them that even minors have miseries."

The meal did not recover its pleasant tone after this little incident, and soon after they all scattered through the house and the grounds, Mrs. Morris setting out for her usual woodland walk, which she took each morning. A half-glance the boy had given her as he quitted the room at breakfast-time, induced her to believe that he wanted to consult her about his letter, and so, as she entered the shrubbery, she was not surprised to find Lord Agincourt there before her.

"I was just wishing it might be your footstep I heard on the gravel," said he, joining her. "May I keep you company?"

"To be sure, provided you don't make love to me, which I never permit in the forenoon."

"Oh, I have other thoughts in my head," said he, sighing drearily; "and you are the very one to advise me what to do. Not, indeed, that I have any choice about that, only how to do it, that's the question."

"When one has the road marked out, it's never very hard to decide on the mode of the journey," said she. "Tell me what your troubles are."

"Troubles you may well call them," said he, with a deeper sigh. "There, read that — if you can read it — for the old Earl does not grow more legible by being older."

"*'Crews Court,'*" read she aloud; "handsome old abbey it must be," added she, remarking on a little tinted sketch at the top of the letter.

"Yes, that's a place of mine. I was born there," said the boy, half proudly.

"It's quite princely."

"It's a fine old thing, and I'd give it all this minute not to have had that disagreeable letter."

"*'My dear Henry,'*" began she, in a low, muttering voice, "I have heard with — with' — not abomination — oh no, 'astonishment — with astonishment, not unmixed with' — it can't be straw — is it straw? — no, it is 'shame — not unmixed with shame, that you have so far forgiven — forgotten' — oh, that's it — 'what was done to yourself.'"

"No. 'What was due to yourself,'" interrupted he; "that's a favourite word of his, and so I know it."

"*'To become the — the' —* dear me, what can this be with the vigorous G at the beginning? — 'to

become' — is it really the Giant? — 'to become the Giant' ———"

The boy here burst into a fit of laughing, and taking the letter from her, proceeded to read it out.

"I have spelt it all over five times," said he, "and I know it by heart. 'I have heard with astonishment, not unmixed with shame, that you have so far forgotten what was due to yourself as to become the Guest of one who for so many years was the political opponent and ever personal enemy of our house. Your ignorance of family history cannot possibly be such as that you are unaware of the claims once put forward by this same Sir William Heathcote to your father's peerage, or of the disgraceful law proceedings instituted to establish his pretensions.' As if I ever heard a word of all this before! as if I knew or cared a brass button about the matter!" burst he in. "'Had your tutor' — here comes in my poor coach for *his* turn," said Agincourt — "'had your tutor but bestowed proper attention to the instructions written by my own hand for his guidance' — we never could read them; we have been at them for hours together, and all we could make out was, 'Let him study hazard, roulette, and all other such games;' which rather surprised us, till we found out it was 'shun,' and not 'study,' and 'only frequent the fast society of each city he visits,' which was a mistake for 'first.'"

"Certainly the noble Lord has a most ambiguous caligraphy," said she, smiling; "and Mr. Layton is not so culpable as might be imagined."

"Ah!" cried the boy, laughing, "I wish you had seen Alfred's face on the day he received our first quarter's remittance, and read out: 'You may drag on

me like a mouse, if you please,' which was intended to be, 'draw upon me to a like amount, if you please;' and it was three weeks before we could make that out! But let me go on — where was I? oh, at 'guidance': 'Recent information has, however, shown me that nothing could have been more unfortunate than our choice of this young man, his father being one of the most dangerous individuals known to the police, a man familiar with the lowest haunts of crime, a notorious swindler, and a libeller by profession. In the letter which I send off by this day's post to your tutor I have enclosed one from his father to myself. It is not very likely that he will show it to you, as it contains the most insolent demands for an increase of salary — "as some slight, though inadequate, compensation for an office unbecoming my son's rank, insulting to his abilities, and even damaging to his acquirements." I give you this in his own choice language, but there is much more in the same strain. The man, it would appear, has just come out of a lunatic asylum, to which place his intemperate habits had brought him; and I may mention, that his first act of gratitude to the benevolent individual who had undertaken the whole cost of his maintenance there was to assault him in the open street, and give him a most savage beating. Captain Hone, or Holmes — a distinguished officer, as I am told — is still confined to his room from the consequences.' "

"How very dreadful!" said Mrs. Morris, calmly. "Shocking treatment! for a distinguished officer, too!"

"Dreadful fellow he must be," said the boy. "What a rare fright he must have given my old guardian!"

But the end of it all is, I'm to leave Alfred, and go back to England at once. I wish I was going to sea again; I wish I was off thousands of miles away, and not to come home for years. To part with the kind, good fellow, that was like a brother to me, this way—how can I do it? And do you perceive, he hasn't one word to say against Alfred? It's only that he has the misfortune of this terrible father. And, after all, might not that be any one's lot? You might have a father you couldn't help being ashamed of."

"Of course," said she; "I can fancy such a case easily enough."

"I know it will nearly kill poor Alfred; he'll not be able to bear it. He's as proud as he is clever, and he'll not endure the tone of the Earl's letter. Who knows what he'll do? Can *you* guess?"

"Not in the least. I imagine that he'll submit as patiently as he can, and look out for another situation."

"Ah, there you don't know him!" broke in the boy; "he can't endure this kind of thing. He only consented to take *me* because his health was breaking up from hard reading; he wanted rest and a change of climate. At first he refused altogether, and only gave way when some of his college dons over-persuaded him."

She smiled a half-assent, but said nothing.

"Then there's another point," said he, suddenly: "I'm sure his Lordship has not been very measured in the terms of his letter to him. I can just fancy the tone of it; and I don't know how poor Alfred is to bear that."

"My dear boy, you'll learn one of these days —

and the knowledge will come not the less soon from your being a Peer — that all the world is either forbearing or overbearing. You must be wolf or lamb; there's no help for it."

"Alfred never told me so," said he, sternly.

"It's more than likely that he did not know! There are no men know less of life than these college creatures; and there lies the great mistake in selecting such men for tutors for our present-day life and its accidents. Alexandre Dumas would be a safer guide than Herodotus; and Thackeray teach you much more than Socrates."

"If I only had in my head one half of what Alfred knew, I'd be well satisfied," said the boy. "Ay, and what's better still, without his thinking a bit about it."

"And so," said she, musingly, "you are to go back to England?"

"That does not seem quite settled, for he says, in a postscript, that Sir George Rivers, one of the Cabinet, I believe, has mentioned some gentleman, a 'member of their party,' now in Italy, and who would probably consent to take charge of me till some further arrangement could be come to."

"Hold your chain till a new bear-leader turned up!" said she, laughing. "Oh dear! I wonder when that wise generation of guardians will come to know that the real guide for the creatures like you is a woman. Yes, you ought to be travelling with your governess — some one, whose lady-like tone and good manners would insensibly instil quietness, reserve, and reverence in your breeding, correct your bad French, and teach you to enter or leave a room without seeming to be a housebreaker!"

"I should like to know who does that?" asked he, indignantly.

"Every one of you young Englishmen, whether you come fresh from Brasenose, or the Mess of the Forty-something, you have all of you the same air of bashful bull-dogs!"

"Oh, come, this is too bad; is this the style of Charles Heathcote, for instance?"

"Most essentially it is; the only thing is that, the bull-dog element predominating in his nature, he appears the less awkward in consequence."

"I should like to hear what you'd say of the O'Shea."

"Oh, Mr. O'Shea is an Irishman, and *their* ways bear the same relation to general good breeding that rope-dancing does to waltzing."

"I'll take good care not to ask you for any description of myself," said he, laughingly.

"You are very wrong, then, for you should have heard something excessively flattering," was her reply. "Shall I tell you who your new protector is to be?" cried she, after a moment's pause; "I have just guessed it: the O'Shea himself!"

"O'Shea! impossible; how could you imagine such a thing?"

"I'm certain I'm right. He is always talking of his friend Sir George Rivers — he calls him Rivers — who is Colonial Secretary, and who is to make him either Bishop of Barbadoes or a Gold Stick at the Gambia; and you'll see if I'm not correct, and that the wardship of a young scapegrace lordling is to be the retaining fee of this faithful follower of his party. Of course, there will be no question of tutorship; in fact,

it would have such an unpleasant resemblance to the farce and Mr. O'Toole, as to be impossible. You will simply be travelling together. It will be double harness, but only one horse doing the work!"

"I never can make out whether you're in jest or in earnest," said he, pettishly.

"I'm always in earnest when I'm jesting; that's the only clue I can give you."

"But all this time we have been wandering away from the only thing I wanted to think of: how to part with dear Alfred. You have told me nothing about that."

"These are things which, as the French say, always do themselves, and, consequently, it is better never to plan or provide for; and, remember, as a maxim, whenever the current is carrying you the way you want to go, put in your oar as little as possible. And as to old associations, they are like old boots: they are very pleasant wear, but they won't last for ever. There, now, I have given you quite enough matter to think over; and so, good-by."

As Agincourt turned his steps slowly towards the house, he marvelled with himself what amount of guidance she had given him.

CHAPTER XIX.

Joe's Diplomacy.

MR. O'SHEA'S man was not one to put his light under a bushel; so, when he received at the post-office a very portentous-looking letter, heavily sealed, and marked "On Her Majesty's Service," he duly stopped the two or three English loungers he saw about to show

them the document, on pretence of asking if any demand for postage could be made; if it had not been wrongfully detained; if they thought it had been opened and read; and so on, — all these inquiries having for their object to inform the general public that the Member for Inch was in close relation and correspondence with Downingstreet.

In sooth, the letter had as significant an external as any gentleman in pursuit of a place might have desired. In colour, texture, and fashion, there was nothing wanting to its authenticity, and it might, without any disparagement to its outside, have named Mr. O'Shea a Governor of the Bahamas, or a Mahogany Commissioner at Ruatan. It was, in fact, a document that, left negligently in the way, might have made a dun appeasable, and a creditor patient. There were few men it might not in some degree have imposed on, but of that few the O'Shea himself was one. He knew well — too well — that it foretold neither place nor employment; that it was the shell of a very small kernel; nothing more, in short, than a note from an old friend and schoolfellow, then acting as the Private Secretary of a Cabinet Minister — one who, indeed, kept his friend O'Shea fully informed as to everything that fell vacant, but, unhappily, accompanied the intelligence with a catalogue of the applicants, usually something like the list of the Smiths in a Directory.

So little impatient was O'Shea for the contents, that he had half eaten his breakfast, and looked through *Punch*, before he broke the seal. The enclosure was from the hand of his friend Tom Radwell, but whose peculiar drollery it was to correspond in the form of a mock despatch. The note, therefore, though merely

containing gossip, was written with all attention to margin and caligraphy, and even in places affected the solemn style of the Office. It was headed "Secret and Confidential," and opened thus:

"SIR, — By your despatch of the 18th ult., containing four enclosures — three protested bills, and your stepmother's I O for 18*l*. 5*s*. — I am induced to believe that no material change has occurred in the situation of your affairs — a circumstance the more to be deplored, inasmuch as her Majesty's Government cannot at this moment, with that due regard imposed on them for the public service, undertake either to reconsider your claims, or by any extraordinary exercise of the powers vested in them by the Act of Teddy the Tiler, chap. 4, secs. 9 and 10, appoint you in the way and manner you propose. So much, my dear Gorman, old Rivers declared to me this morning, confidentially adding, I wish that Irish party would understand that, when we could buy them altogether in a basket, as in O'Connell's day, the arrangement was satisfactory; but to have to purchase them separately — each potato by himself — is a terrible loss of time, and leads to no end of higgling. Why can't you agree amongst yourselves — make your bargain, and then divide the spoils quietly? It is the way your forefathers understood the law of commonage, and nobody ever grumbled that his neighbour had a cow or a pig too many! The English of all this is, they don't want you just now, and they won't have you, for you're an article that never kept well, and even when bonded, your loss by leakage is considerable.

"Every Irishman I ever met makes the same mis-

take of offering himself for sale when the commodity is not wanted. If you see muffs and boas in Regent-street in July, ain't they always ticketed 'a great sacrifice?' Can't you read the lesson? But so it is with you. You fancy you'll induce people to travel a bad road by putting up a turnpike.

"I'm sorry to say all this to you, but I see plainly politics will not do any longer as a pursuit. It is not only that all appointments are so scrutinised now-a-days, but that every man's name in a division is weighed and considered in a fashion that renders a mere majority of less moment than the fact of how it was composed. If I cannot manage something for you in the West Indies, you must try Cheltenham.

"Rivers has just sent for me.

"What of your friend O'Shea? Didn't you tell me he was in the north of Italy?"

"Yes," said I; "he's getting up the Italian question. He has accumulated a mass of facts which will astonish the House next session."

"Confound his facts!" muttered he. "Here has been Lord Sommerville with me, about some young ward of his. I don't well understand what he wants, or what he wishes me to do; but the drift is, to find some one — a gentleman, of course — who would take charge of the boy for a short time; he is a Marquis, with large expectations, and one day or other will be a man of mark."

"I tried the dignity tone, but old Rivers interrupted me quickly:

"Yes, yes, of course. Mere companionship, nothing more. Sound O'Shea upon it, and let me hear."

"Here, then, my dear Gorman, is the 'opening' you

so long have looked for; and if *you* cannot turn such a position to good profit, *who* can? Nor are you the man I take you for, if you're not married into the family before this day twelvemonth! There is no time to be lost, so telegraph back at once. A simple 'Yes' will do, if you accept, which I sincerely hope you will. All the minor arrangements you may safely trust to *me*."

When Mr. O'Shea had read thus far, he arose, and walking with head erect, and well thrown-out chest, towards the looking-glass, he desired to "take stock" of his appearance, and to all semblance was not displeased at the result. He was autumnalising, it is true; tints were mellowing, colours more sombre, but, on the whole, there was nothing in the landscape, viewed at due distance and with suitable light, to indicate much ravage from Time. Your hard-featured men, like mountains in scenery, preserve the same appearance unchanged by years. It is your genial fellow, with mobile features, that suffers so terribly from age. The plough of Time leaves deep furrows in the arable soil of such faces. As in those frescoes which depend altogether on colour, the devastations of years are awfully felt; when black degenerates into grey, mellow browns grow a muddy yellow, and the bright touches that "accentuated" expression are little else than unmeaning blotches! If the Member for Inch had not travelled far upon the dreary road, I am bound in truth to own that he had begun the journey. A light, faint silvering showed on his whiskers, like the first touch of snow on an Alpine fern in October. The lines that indicated a ready aptitude for fun had deepened, and grown more marked

at the angles at the mouth — a sad sign of one whose wit was less genial and more biting than of yore. Then — worst of all — he had entered upon the pompous lustre wherein men feel an exaggerated self-importance, imagine that their opinions are formed, and their character matured. Nothing is so trying as that quarantine period, and both men and women make more egregious fools of themselves in it than in all the wild heyday of early youth.

Mr. O'Shea, however, was an Irishman, and, in virtue of the fact, he had a light, jaunty, semi-careless way with him, which is a sort of electroplate youth, and looks like the real article, though it won't prove so lasting.

"I must have a look into the Peerage," said he, as he turned to the bulky volume that records the alliances and the ages of the "upper ten thousand:"

"'Lady Maria Augusta Sofronia Montserrat, born' — oh, by the powers, that won't do! — 'born 1804.' Oh, come, after all, it's not so bad; 'died in '46. — Charlotte Rose Leopoldine, died in infancy. — Henrietta Louisa, born 1815; married in 1835 to Lord Julius de Raby; again married to Prince Beerstenshof-ten von Hahnsmarkt, and widowed same year, 1846.' I'll put a mark against her. And there's one more, 'Juliana de Vere, youngest daughter, born '26' — that's the time of day! — born '26, and no more said. The paragraph has yet to be filled with, 'Married to the O'Shea, Member of Parliament for Inchabogue, High Sheriff of Tipperary, and head of the ancient sept known as O'Meadhlin Shamdoodhlin Naboklish O'Shea' — I wonder if they'd put it in — 'formerly Kings of Tulloch Reardhin and Bare-ma-bookle, and all the

countries west of the Galtee Mountains.' If pedigree would do it, O'Shea may call himself first favourite! And now, Miss Leslie," continued he, aloud, "you have no time to lose; make your bidding quickly, or the O'Shea will be knocked down to another purchaser. As Eugene Aram says, 'I'm equal to either fortune.'"

"Well," said Joe, entering the room, and approaching his master confidentially, "is it a place?"

"Nothing of the kind; a friendly letter from a member of the Cabinet," replied he, carelessly.

"Devil take them! It isn't friendship we want — it's something to live on."

"You are a low-minded, mercenary creature," said O'Shea, oratorically. "Is our happiness in this life, our self-respect, our real worth, dependent upon the accident of our station, or upon the place we occupy in the affections of men — what we possess of their sympathy and love? I look around me, and what do I see?"

"Sorrah bit of me knows," broke in Joe.

Unmindful of the interruption, O'Shea continued: "I see the high places occupied by the crafty, the subtle, and the scheming."

"I wish we had one of them," muttered Joe.

"I see that humble merit shivers at the door, while insolent pretension struts proudly in."

"Ay, and more power to him, if he's able," grumbled out the other.

"I see more," said O'Shea, raising his voice, and extending his arm at full length — "I see a whole nation — eight millions of men — great, glorious, and gifted — men whose genius has shed a lustre over the

dull swamp of their oppressors' nature, but who one day, rising from her ashes —"

"Ah! by my conscience, I knew it was comin'; and I said to myself, 'Here's the phaynix!'"

"Rising from her ashes like the Megatherion of Thebes. Where are you now, Master Joe?" said he, with an insolent triumph in his look.

"I'd just as soon have the phaynix," said Joe, doggedly. "Go on."

"How can I go on? How could any man? Demosthenes himself would stand confused in presence of such vulgar interruptions. It is in such temperaments as yours men of genius meet their worst repulses. You are at once the *feræ naturæ* of humanity, and the pestilential atmosphere that poisons — that poisons —"

"Oh! there you are 'pounded!' Poisons what?"

"Poisons the pellucid rills which should fertilise the soul of man! I'm never pounded. O'Connell himself had to confess that he never saw my equal in graceful imagery and figurative embellishment. 'Listening to O'Shea,' says he, 'is like watching a juggler with eight balls flying round and about him. You may think it impossible he'll be in time, but never one of them will he fail to catch.' That's what I call oratory. Why is it, I ask, that, when I rise in the House, you'd hear a pin drop?"

"Maybe they steal out on their tiptoes," said Joe, innocently.

"No, Sir, they stand hushed, eager, anxious, as were the Greeks of old to catch the words of Ulysses. I only wish you saw old P— working away with his pencil while I'm speaking."

"Making a picture of you, maybe!"

"You are as insolent as you are ignorant — one of those who, in the unregenerate brutality of their coarse nature, repel the attempts of all who would advocate the popular cause. I have said so over and over again. If you would constitute yourself the friend of the people, take care to know nothing of them; neither associate with them, nor mix in their society: as Tommy Moore said of Ireland, 'It's a beautiful country to live out of.'"

"And *he* was a patriot!" said Joe, contemptuously.

"There are no patriots amongst those who soar above the miserable limits of a nationality. Genius has no concern with geographies. To think for the million you must forget the man."

"Say that again. I like the sound of that," cried Joe, admiringly.

"If anything could illustrate the hopelessness of your class and condition in life," continued O'Shea, "it is yourself. There you are, daily, hourly associated with one whose sentiments you hear, whose opinions you learn, whose judgments you record; one eagerly sought after in society, revered in private, honoured in the senate; and what have you derived from these unparalleled advantages? What can you say has been the benefit from these relations?"

"It's hard to say," muttered Joe, "except, maybe, it's made me a philosopher."

"A philosopher! — you a philosopher!"

"Ay; isn't it philosophy to live without wages, and work without pay. 'Tis from yourself I heard that the finest thing of all is to despise money."

"So it is — so it would be, I mean, if society had not built up that flimsy card edifice it calls civilisation.

Put out my blue pelisse with the Astracan collar, and my braided vest: I shall want to go over to the Villa this morning. But, first of all, take this to the telegraph-office, 'The O'Shea accepts.'"

"Tear and ages! what is't we've got?" asked Joe, eagerly.

"'The O'Shea accepts' — four words, if they charge for the 'O.' Let me know the cost at once."

"But why don't you tell where we're going? Is it Jamaica or Jerusalem?"

"Call your philosophy to your aid, and be anxious for nothing," said O'Shea, pompously. "Away! lose no more time."

If Joe had been the exponent of his feelings, as he left the room he would probably have employed his favourite phrase, and confessed himself "humiliated." He certainly did feel acutely the indignity that had been passed upon him. To live on a precarious diet and no pay was bad enough, but it was unendurable that his master should cease to consult with and confide in him. Amongst the shipwrecked sufferers on a raft, gradations of rank soon cease to be remembered, and of all equalisers there is none like misery! Now, Mr. O'Shea and his man Joe had, so to say, passed years of life upon a raft. They had been storm-tossed and cast away for many a day. Indeed, to push the analogy further, they had more than once drawn lots who should be first devoured — that is to say, they had tossed up whose watch was to go first to the pawnbroker. Now, was it fair or reasonable, if his master discovered a sail in the distance, or a headland on the horizon, that he should conceal the consoling fact, and

leave his fellow-sufferer to mourn on in misery? Joe was deeply wounded — he was insulted and outraged.

From the pain of his personal wrongs he was suddenly aroused by the telegraph clerk's demand for thirty francs.

"Thirty francs for four words?"

"You might send twenty for the same sum," was the bland reply.

"Faix, and so we will," said Joe. "Give me a pen and a sheet of paper."

His first inspirations were so full of vengeance, that he actually meditated a distinct refusal of whatever it was had been offered to his master, and his only doubt was how to convey the insolent negative in its most outrageous form. His second and wiser thoughts suggested a little diplomacy, and though both the consideration and the mode of effectuating it cost no small time and labour, we shall spare the reader's patience, and give him the result arrived at after nearly an hour's exertion, the message transmitted by Joe running thus:

"Send the fullest particulars about the pay and the name of the place we're going to.

"O'SHEA."

"I don't think there will be many secrets after I see the answer to that; and see it I will, if I tear it open!" said Joe, sturdily, as he held his way back to the inn.

A rather warm discussion ensued on the subject of his long absence, O'Shea remarking that for all the use Joe proved himself he might as well be without a servant, and Joe rejoining that, for the matter of pay

and treatment, *he* might be pretty nearly as well off if he had no master; these polite passages being interchanged while the O'Shea was busily performing with two hair-brushes, and Joe equally industriously lacing his master's waistcoat, with an artistic skill that the valet of a corpulent gentleman alone attains to, as Joe said a hundred times.

"I wonder why I endure you," said O'Shea, as he jauntily settled his hat on one side of his head, and carefully arranged the hair on the other.

"And you'll wondher more, when I'm gone, why I didn't go before," was Joe's surly rejoinder.

"How did you come by that striped cravat, Sir?" asked O'Shea, angrily, as he caught sight of Joe in front.

"I took it out of the drawer."

"It's mine, then!"

"It was wonst. I didn't suppose you'd wear it after what the widow woman said of you up at the Villa — that Mrs. Morris: 'Here's the O'Shea,' says she, 'masquerading as a zebra;' as much as to say it was another baste you was in reality."

"She never dared to be so insolent."

"She did; I heard it myself."

"I don't believe you; I never do believe one word you say."

"That's exactly what I hear whenever I say you're a man of fine fortune and good estate; they all cry out, 'What a lying rascal he is!'"

O'Shea made a spring towards the poker, and Joe as rapidly took up a position behind the dressing-glass.

"Hush!" cried O'Shea, "there's some one at the door."

And a loud summons at the same time confirmed the words. With a ready instinct Joe speedily recovered himself, and hastened to open it.

"Is your master at home?" asked a voice.

"Oh, Heathcote, is it you?" exclaimed O'Shea; "just step into the next room, and I'll be with you in a second or two. Joe, show Captain Heathcote into the drawing-room."

"I wondher what's the matter with him?" said Joe, confidentially, as he came back. "I never see any one look so low."

"So much the better," said O'Shea, merrily; "it's a sign he's coming to pay money. When a man is about to put you off with a promise, he lounges in with an easy, devil-may-care look, that seems to say, 'It's all one, old fellow, whether you have an I O or the ready tin.'"

"There's a deal of truth in that," said Joe, approvingly, and with a look that showed how pleasurable it was to him to hear such words of wisdom.

CHAPTER XX.

A Dreary Forenoon.

O'SHEA swaggered into the room where Heathcote was standing to await him, in the attitude of one who desired to make his visit as brief as might be.

"How good of you to drive over to this dreary spot," began the Member, jauntily, "where the blue devils seem to have their especial home. I'm hiped and bored here as I never was before. Come, sit down; have you breakfasted?"

"Three hours ago."

"Take some luncheon, then — a glass of sherry, at least."

"Nothing — thanks — it's too early."

"Won't you have even a weed?" said he, opening a cigar-box.

"I'm provided," said the other, showing the half of a still lighted cigar. "I came over this morning, hoping to catch you at home, and make some sort of settlement about our little transactions together."

"My dear fellow, you surely can't think it makes any matter between *us*. I hope you know that it is entirely a question for your own convenience. No man has more experience of what it is to be 'hit hard,' as they say. When I first came out, I got it. By Jove! didn't I get it, and at both sides of the head, too. It was Mopus's year, when the Yorkshire Lass ran a dead heat with Skyrocket for the Diddlesworth. I stood seventeen to one, in thousands! think of that — seventeen thousand pounds to one against the filly. It was thought so good a thing that Naylor — old Jerry as they used to call him — offered me a clean thousand to let him take half the wager. But these are old stories now, and they only bore you; in fact, it was just to show you that every man has his turn —"

"I own frankly," broke in Heathcote, "I am far too full of selfish cares to take a proper interest in your story. Just tell me if these figures are correct?" And he turned to look out for a particular page in a small book.

"Confound figures! I wish they never were invented. If one only thinks of all the hearty fellows they've set by the ears, the close friendships they have severed, the strong attachments they have broken,

I declare one would be justified in saying it was the devil himself invented arithmetic."

"I wish he'd have made it easier when he was about it," said Heathcote.

"Excellent, by Jove! — how good! 'made it easier' — capital!" cried O'Shea, laughing with a boisterous jollity that made the room ring. "I hope I'll not forget that. I must book that 'mot' of yours."

Heathcote grew crimson with shame, and, in an angry impulse, pitched his cigar into the fire.

"That's right," broke in O'Shea; "these are far better smoking than your cheroots — these are Hudson's 'Grand Viziers,' made especially for Abbas Pasha's own smoking."

Heathcote declined, coldly, and continued his search through his note-book.

"It was odd enough," said O'Shea, "just as you came in I was balancing in my own mind whether I'd go over to the Villa, or write to you."

"Write to me!" said the other, reddening.

"Don't be scared; it was not to dun you. No; I was meditating whether it was quite fair of me to take that trap and the nags. *You* like that sort of thing; it suits you, too. Now, I'm sobering down into the period of Park phaetons and George the Fourths: a low step to get in, and a deep, well-cushioned seat, with plenty of leg room; that's more my style. As Holditch says, 'The O'Shea wants an arm-chair upon C springs, and Collinge's patent.' Free and easy that, from a rascally coachmaker, eh?"

"I don't want the horses. I have no use for them. I'm not quite clear whether you valued the whole thing at two hundred and fifty or three hundred and fifty?"

"We said, two fifty," replied O'Shea, in his silkiest of tones.

"Be it so," muttered Heathcote; "I gave two hundred for the chesnut horse at Tattersall's."

"He was dear — too dear," was the dry reply.

"Esterhazy called him the best horse he ever bred."

"He shall have him this morning for a hundred and twenty."

"Well, well," burst in Heathcote, "we are not here to dispute about that. I handed you, as well as I remember, eighty, and two hundred and thirty Naps."

"More than that, I think," said O'Shea, thoughtfully, and as if labouring to recollect clearly.

"I'm certain I'm correct," said Heathcote, haughtily. "I made no other payments than these two — eighty, and two hundred and thirty."

"What a memory I have, to be sure!" said O'Shea, laughingly. "I remember now, it was a rouleau of fifty that I paid away to Layton was running in my head."

Heathcote's lip curled superciliously, but it was only for a second, and his features were calm as before. "Two thirty and eighty make three hundred and ten, and three fifty —"

"Two fifty for the trap!" broke in O'Shea.

"Ah! to be sure, two fifty, make altogether five hundred and sixty Naps., leaving, let me see — ninety-four — sixty-one — one hundred and twelve —"

"A severe night that was. You never won a game!" chimed in O'Shea.

"— One hundred and twelve and seventy, making three hundred and thirty-seven in all. Am I right?"

"Correct as Cocker, only you have forgotten your walk against time, from the fish-pond to the ranger's lodge. What was it — ten Naps., or twenty?"

"Neither. It was five, and I paid it!" was the curt answer.

"Ain't I the stupidest dog that ever sat for a borough?" said O'Shea, bursting out into one of his boisterous laughs. "Do you know, I'd have been quite willing to have bet you a cool hundred about that?"

"And you'd have lost," said Heathcote, dryly.

"Not a doubt of it, and deserved it, too," said he, merrily.

"I have brought you here one hundred and fifty," said Heathcote, laying down three rouleaux on the table, "and, for the remainder, my note at three months. I hope that may not prove inconvenient?"

"Inconvenient, my boy! never say the word. Not to mention that fortune may take a turn one of these days, and all this California find its way back to its own diggings."

"I don't mean to play any more."

"Not play any more! Do you mean to say that, because you have been once repulsed, you'll never charge again? Is that your soldier's pluck?"

"There is no question here of my soldier's pluck. I only said I'd not play at billiards."

"May I ask you one thing? How can you possibly expect to attain excellence in any pursuit, great or small, when you are so easily abashed?"

"May I take the same liberty with you, and ask how can it possibly concern any one but myself that I have taken this resolution?"

"There you have me! a hazard and no mistake! I

may be your match at billiards, but when it comes to repartee you are the better man, Heathcote."

Coarse as the flattery was, it was not unpleasing. Indeed, in its very coarseness there was a sort of mock sincerity, just as the stroke of a heavy hand on your shoulder is occasionally taken for good fellowship, though you wince under the blow. Now Heathcote was not only gratified by his own smartness, but after a moment or two he felt half sorry he had been so "severe on the poor fellow." He had over-shotted his gun, and there was really no necessity to rake him so heavily; and so, with a sort of blundering bashfulness, he said,

"You're not offended — you're not angry with me?"

"Offended! angry! nothing of the kind. I believe I am a peppery sort of fellow — at least, down in the west there they say as much of me — but once a man is my friend — once that I feel all straight and fair between us — he may bowl me over ten times a day, and I'll never resent it."

There was a pause after this, and Heathcote found his position painfully awkward. He did not fancy exactly to repudiate the friendship thus assumed, and he certainly did not like to put his name to the bond; and so he walked to the window and looked out with that half-hopeless vacuity bashful men are prone to.

"What's the weather going to do?" said he, carelessly. "More rain?"

"Of course, more rain! Amongst all the humbugs of the day, do you know of one equal to the humbug of the Italian climate? Where's the blue sky they rave about?"

"Not there, certainly," said Heathcote, laughing, as he looked up at the leaden-coloured canopy that lowered above them.

"My father used to say," said O'Shea, "that it was all a mistake to talk about the damp climate of Ireland; the real grievance was, that when it rained it always rained dirty water!"

The conceit amused Heathcote, and he laughed again. "There it comes now, and with a will, too!" And at the same instant, with a rushing sound like hail, the rain poured down with such intensity as to shut out the hills directly in front of the windows.

"You're caught this time, Heathcote. Make the best of it, like a man, and resign yourself to eat a mutton-chop here with me at four o'clock; and if it clears in the evening, I'll canter back with you."

"No, no, the weather will take up — this is only a shower. They'll expect me back to dinner, besides. Confound it, how it does come down!"

"Oh, faith!" said O'Shea, half mournfully, "I don't wonder that you're less afraid of the rain than a bad dinner."

"No, it's not that — nothing of the kind," broke in Heathcote, hurriedly; "at another time I should be delighted! Who ever saw such rain as that!"

"Look at the river, too. See how it is swollen already."

"Ah! I never thought of the mountain torrents," said Heathcote, suddenly.

"They'll be coming down like regular cataracts by this time. I defy any one to cross at Borgo even now. Take my advice, Heathcote, and reconcile yourself to old Pan's cookery for to-day."

"What time do you dine?"

"What time will suit you? Shall we say four or five?"

"Four, if you'll permit me. Four will do capitally."

"That's all right. And now I'll just step down to Panini myself, and give him a hint about some Burgundy he has got in the cellar."

Like most men yielding to necessity, Heathcote felt discontented and irritated, and no sooner was he alone than he began to regret his having accepted the invitation. What signified a wetting? He was on horseback, to be sure, but he was well mounted, and it was only twelve miles — an hour, or an hour and a quarter's, sharp canter; and as to the torrents, up to the girths, perhaps, or a little beyond — it could scarcely come to swimming. Thus he argued with himself as he walked to and fro, and chafed and fretted as he went. It was in this irritated state O'Shea found him when he came back.

"We're all right. They've got a brace of woodcock below stairs, and some Pistoja mutton; and as I have forbidden oil and all the grease-pots, we'll manage to get a morsel to eat."

"I was just thinking how stupid I was to — to — to put you to all this inconvenience," said he, hastily changing a rudeness into an apology.

"Isn't it a real blessing for me to catch you?" cried O'Shea, "Imagine me shut up here by myself all day, no one to speak to, nothing to do, nothing to read but that old volume of the 'Wandering Jew,' that I begin to know by heart, or, worse again, that speech of mine on the Italian question, that whenever I've nearly finished it the vil-

lains are sure to do something or other that destroys all my predictions and ruins my argument. What would have become of me to-day if you hadn't dropped in?"

Heathcote apparently did not feel called upon to answer this inquiry, but walked the room moodily, with his hands in his pockets.

O'Shea gave a little faint sigh — such a sigh as a weary pedestrian may give, as, turning the angle of the way, he sees seven miles of straight road before him, without bend or curve. It was now eleven o'clock, and five dreary hours were to be passed before dinner-time.

Oh, my good reader, has it been amongst your life experiences to have submitted to an ordeal of this kind — to be caged up of a wet day with an unwilling guest, whom you are called on to amuse, but know not how to interest; to feel that you are bound to employ his thoughts, with the sad consciousness that in every pause of the conversation he is cursing his hard fate at being in your company; to know that you must deploy all the resources of your agreeability without even a chance of success, your very efforts to amuse constituting in themselves a boredom? It is as great a test of temper as of talent. Poor O'Shea, one cannot but pity you! To be sure, you are not without little aids to pass time, in the shape of cards, dice, and such-like. I am not quite sure that a travelling roulette-table is not somewhere amongst your effects. But of what use are they all *now*? None would think of a lecture on anatomy to a man who had just suffered amputation.

No, no! play must not be thought of — it must be most sparingly alluded to even in conversation — and

so what remains? O'Shea was not without reminiscences, and he "went into them like a man." He told scenes of early Trinity College life; gave sketches of his contemporaries, one or two of them now risen to eminence; he gave anecdotes of Gray's Inn, where he had eaten his terms; of Templar life, its jollities and its gravities; of his theatrical experiences, when he wrote the "Drama" for two weekly periodicals; of his like employ when he reported prize-fights, boat-races, and pigeon-matches for *Bell's Life*. He then gave a sketch of his entrance into public life, with a picture of an Irish election, dashed off spiritedly and boldly; but all he could obtain from his phlegmatic listener was a faint smile at times, and a low muttering sound, that resolved itself into, "What snobs!"

At last he was in the House, dealing with great names and great events, which he ingeniously blended up with Bellamy's and the oyster suppers below stairs; but it was no use — they, too, were snobs! It was all snobbery everywhere. Freshmen, Templars, Pugilists, Scullers, County Electors, and House of Commons celebrities — all snobs!

O'Shea then tried the Turf — disparagingly, as a great moralist ought. They were, as he said, a "bad lot;" but he knew them well, and they "couldn't hurt him." He had a variety of curious stories about racing knaveries, and could clear up several mysterious circumstances, which all the penetration of the "Ring" had never succeeded in solving. Heathcote, however, was unappeasable; and these, too — trainers, jockeys, judges, and gentlemen — they were all snobs!

It was only two o'clock, and there were two more mortal hours to get through before dinner. With a

bright inspiration he bethought him of bitter beer. Oh, Bass! ambrosia of the barrack-room, thou nectar of the do-nothings in this life, how gracefully dost thou deepen dulness into drowsiness, making stupidity but semi-conscious! What a bond of union art thou between those who have talked themselves out, and would, without thy consoling froth, become mutually odious! Instead of the torment of suggestiveness which other drinks inspire, how gloriously lethargic are all thy influences, how mind-quelling, and how muddling!

There is, besides, a vague notion prevalent with your beer drinker, that there is some secret of health in his indulgence — that he is undergoing a sort of tonic regimen, something to make him more equal to the ascent of Mont Blanc, or the defeat of the Zouaves, and he grows in self-esteem as he sips. It is not the boastful sentiment begotten of champagne, or the defiant courage of port, but a dogged, resolute, resistant spirit, stout in its nature, and bitter to the last!

And thus they sipped, and smoked, and said little to each other, and the hours stole over, and the wintry day darkened apace, and, at last, out of a drowsy nap over the fire, the waiter awoke them, to say dinner was on the table.

"You were asleep!" said O'Shea to his companion.

"Yes, 'twas your snoring set me off!" replied Heathcote, stretching himself, as he walked to the window. "Raining just as hard as ever!"

"Come along," said the other, gaily. "Let us see what old Pan has done for us."

CHAPTER XXI.

Mr. O'Shea upon Politics, and Things in General.

It was a most appetising little dinner that was now set before the O'Shea and Charles Heathcote. The trout from Castellano, and the mutton from Pistoja, were each admirable; and a brace of woodcocks, shot in the first snow-storm on the Carrara mountains, were served in a fashion that showed the cook had benefited by English teachings.

"There are worse places than this, after all!" said O'Shea, as he sat at one side of the fire, Heathcote opposite, and a small table liberally covered with decanters between them.

"Wonderful Burgundy this," said Heathcote, gazing at his glass in the light. "What does he call it?"

"He calls it Lafitte. These fellows think all red wines come from the Bordeaux country. Here it is — marked seven francs."

"Cheap at double the price. My governor will take every bottle of it."

"Not before I leave, I hope," said O'Shea, laughing. "I trust he'll respect what they call vested interests."

"Oh, by the way," said the other, indolently, "you *are* going?"

"Yes. Our party are getting uneasy, and I am constantly receiving letters pressing me to return to England."

"Want you in the House, perhaps?" said Heathcote, as he puffed his cigar in lazy enjoyment.

"Just so. You see, a parliamentary session is a sort of campaign in which every arm of warfare is

needed. You want your great guns for the grand battles, your dashing cavalry charges for emergencies, and your light skirmishers to annoy the enemy and disconcert his advance."

"And which are *you*?" asked the other, in a tone of bantering indifference.

"Well, I'm what you might call a mounted rifleman — a dash of the dragoon with a spice of the sharpshooter."

"Sharp enough, I take it," muttered Heathcote, who bethought him of the billiard-table, and the wonderful "hazards" O'Shea used to accomplish.

"You understand," resumed the Member, confidentially, "I don't come out on the Budget, or Reform, or things of that kind; but I lie by till I hear some one make a blunder or a mistake, no matter how insignificant, and then I'm down on him, generally with an anecdote — something he reminds me of — and for which I'm sure to have the laugh against him. It's so easy, besides, to make them laugh; the worst jokes are always successful in the House of Commons."

"Dull fellows, I suppose?" chimed in Heathcote.

"No, indeed; not that. Go down with six or eight of them to supper, and you'll say you never met pleasanter company. 'Tis being caged up there all together, saying the same things over and over, that's what destroys them."

"It must be a bore, I take it?" sighed out Heathcote.

"I'll tell you what it is," said O'Shea, as, in a voice of deepest confidence, he leaned over the table and spoke — "I'll tell you what it is. Did you ever

play the game called Brag, with very little money in your pocket?"

Heathcote nodded what might mean assent or the opposite.

"That's what Parliament is," resumed O'Shea. "You sit there, night after night, year after year, wondering within yourself, 'Would it be safe for me to play this hand? shall I venture now?' You know well that if you *do* back your luck and lose, that it's all up with you for ever, so that it's really a mighty serious thing to risk it. At last, maybe, you take courage. You think you've got the cards; it's half-past two o'clock; the House is thin, and every one tired and sleepy. Up you get on your legs to speak. You're not well down again, till a fellow from the back benches, you thought sound asleep, gets up and tears all you said to tatters; destroys your facts, scatters your inferences, and maybe laughs at your figures of speech."

"Not so pleasant, that," said Heathcote, languidly.

"Pleasant! it's the devil!" said O'Shea, violently; "for you hear the pens scratching away up in the reporters' gallery, and you know it will be all over Europe next morning."

"Then why submit to all this?" asked Heathcote, more eagerly.

"Just as I said a while ago: because you might chance upon a good card, and 'brag' on it for something worth while. It's all luck."

"Your picture of political life is not fascinating," said Heathcote, coldly.

"After all, do you know, I like it," resumed O'Shea. "As long as you've a seat in the House, there's no saying when you mightn't be wanted; and then, when

the session's over, and you go down to the country, you are the terror of all the fellows that never sat in Parliament. If they say a word about public matters, you put them down at once with a cool 'I assure you, Sir, that's not the view we take of it in the House.'"

"I'd say, 'What's that to *me*?'"

"No you wouldn't — not a bit of it; or, if you did, nobody would mind you, and for this reason — it's the *real* place, after all. Why do you pay Storr and Mortimer more than another jeweller? Just because you're sure of the article. There now, that's how it is!"

"There's some one knocking at the door, I think," said Heathcote; but at the same instant Joe's head appeared inside, with a request to be admitted. "'Tis the telegraph," said he, presenting a packet.

"I have asked for a small thing in Jamaica — some ten 'or twelve hundred a year" — whispered O'Shea to his friend. "I suppose this is the reply." And at the same time he threw the portentous envelope carelessly on the table.

Either Heathcote felt no interest in the subject, or deemed it proper to seem as indifferent as his host, for he never took any further notice of the matter, but smoked away as before.

"You needn't wait," said O'Shea to Joe, who still lingered at the door. "That fellow is bursting with curiosity now," said he, as the man retired; "he'd give a year's wages to know what was inside that envelope."

"Indeed!" sighed out Heathcote, in a tone that showed how little he sympathised with such eagerness.

If O'Shea was piqued at this cool show of indifference, he resolved to surpass it by appearing to forget

the theme altogether; and, pushing the bottle across the table, he said, "Did I ever tell you how it was I first took to politics?"

"No, I think not," said Heathcote, listlessly.

"Well, it was a chance, and a mere chance: this is the way it happened. Though I was bred to the Bar I never did much at the law: some say, that an agreeable man, with a lively turn in conversation, plenty of anecdote, and a rich fancy, is never a favourite with the attorneys; the rascals always think that such a man will never make a lawyer, and though they'll listen to his good stories by the hour in the Hall, devil a brief they'll give him, nor so much as a 'declaration.' Well, for about five years I walked about in wig and gown, joking, and quizzing, and humbugging all the fellows that were getting business, and taking a circuit now and then, but all to no good; and at last I thought I'd give it up, and so my friends advised me, saying, 'Get something under the Government, Gorman; a snug place with a few hundreds a year, and be sure take anything that's offered you to begin with.'

"Now, there was a room in Dublin Castle — it's the second down the corridor off the private stairs — that used to be called the Poker-room. It may be so still for anything I know, and for this reason: it was there all the people expecting places or appointments were accustomed to wait. It was a fine, airy, comfortable room, with a good carpet, easy-chairs, and always an excellent fire; and here used to meet every day of their lives the same twenty or five-and-twenty people, one occasionally dropping off, and another coming in, but so imperceptibly and gradually, that

the gathering at last grew to be a sort of club, where they sat from about eleven till dark every day, chatting pleasantly over public and private events. It was thus found necessary to give it a kind of organisation, and so we named for President the oldest — that is, the longest expectant of place — who, by virtue of his station, occupied the seat next the fire, and alone, of all the members, possessed the privilege of poking it. The poker was his badge of office; and the last act of his official life, whenever promotion separated him from us, was to hand the poker to his successor, with a solemn dignity of manner and a few parting words. I verily believe that most of us got to be so fond of the club, that it was the very reverse of a pleasure, when he had to leave it, to become, maybe, a Police Inspector at Skibbereen, Postmaster at Tory Island, or a Gauger at Innismagee; and so we jogged on, from one Viceroy to another, very happy and contented. Well, it was the time of a great Marquis — I won't say who, but he was the fast friend of O'Connell — and we all of us thought that there would be plenty of fine things giving away, and the Poker-room was crammed, and I was the President, having ascended the throne two years and a half before. It was somewhere early in March; a cold, raw day it was. I had scarcely entered the club, than a messenger bawled out, 'Gorman O'Shea — Mr. Gorman O'Shea.' 'Here he is,' said I. 'Wanted in the Chief Secretary's office,' said he, 'immediately.' I gave a knowing wink to the company around the fire, and left the room. Three mortal hours did I stand in the ante-room below, seeing crowds pass in and out before I was called in; and then, as I entered, saw a little wizened, sharp-faced

man standing with his back to the fire paring his nails. He never so much as looked at me, but said, in a careless, muttering sort of way,

“‘You’re the gentleman who wishes to go as resident magistrate to Oackatoro, ain’t you?’

“‘Well, indeed, Sir, I’m not quite sure,’ I began.

“‘Oh yes you are,’ broke he in. ‘I know all about you. Your name has been favourably mentioned to the office. You are Mr. O’Gorman —’

“‘Mr. Gorman O’Shea,’ said I, proudly.

“‘The same thing, Gorman O’Shea. I remember it now. Your appointment will be made out: five hundred a year, and a retiring pension after six years; house, and an allowance for monkeys.’

“‘A what?’ asked I.

“‘The place is much infested with a large species of ourang-outang, and the Governor gives so much per head for destroying them. Mr. Simpson, in the office, will give you full information. You are to be at your post by the 1st of August.’

“‘Might I make bold to ask where Whackatory is?’

“‘Oackatoro, Sir,’ said he, proudly, ‘is the capital of Fighi. I trust I need not say where that is.’

“‘By no means,’ said I, modestly; and, muttering my thanks for the advancement, I backed out, almost deranged to think that I didn’t know where I was going.

“‘Where is it? What is it? How much is it, O’Shea?’ cried thirty ardent voices as I entered the club.

“‘It’s five hundred a year,’ said I, ‘without counting the monkeys. It’s a magistrate’s place; but may a

gooseberry-skin make a night-cap for me if I know where the devil it is!

“‘But you have accepted!’ cried they out all together.

“‘I have,’ said I; ‘I’m to be at Figghi, wherever that is, by the 1st of August. And now,’ said I, turning to the fire, and taking up the poker, ‘there is nothing for me to do but resign this sacred symbol of my office into the hands of my successor.’

“‘Where’s O’Dowd?’ shouted out the crowd. And they awoke out of a pleasant sleep a little old fellow that never missed his day for two years at the club.

“‘Gentlemen,’ said I, in a voice trembling with feeling, ‘the hour is come when my destiny is to separate me from you for ever; an hour that is equally full of the past and the future, and has even no small share of present emotions. If ever there were a human institution devised to cement together the hearts and affections of men, to bind them into one indissoluble mass, and blend their instincts into identity, it is the club we have here. Here we stand, like the departed spirits at the Styx, waiting for the bark of Charon to ferry us over. To what, however? Is it to some blessed elysium of a Poor Law Commissioner’s place, or is it to some unknown fate in a distant land, with five hundred a year and an allowance for monkeys? That’s the question, there’s the rub! as Hamlet says.’ After dilating at large on this, I turned to O’Dowd. ‘To your hands,’ said I, ‘I commit this venerable relic: keep it, guard it, honour it, and preserve it. Remember,’ said I, ‘that when you stir those coals it is the symbol of keeping alive in the heart the sparks of an undying hope; that though they may wet the slack

and water the cinders of our nature, the fire within us will still survive, red, glowing, and generous. Isn't that as fine as great, glorious, and free, I ask you?"

"Who is that fellow that's talking there, with a voice like Lablache?" asked a big man at the door; and then, as the answer was whispered in his ear, he said, 'Send him out here to me.'

"Out I went, and found myself face to face with O'Connell.

"I want a man to stand for Drogheda to-morrow; the gentleman I expected cannot arrive there possibly before three. Will you address the electors, and speak till he comes? If he isn't there by half-past three, you shall be returned!"

"Done!" said I. And by five o'clock on the following evening Gorman O'Shea was at the top of the poll, and declared Member for Drogheda! That was, I may say, the first lift I ever got from Fortune. May I never!" exclaimed O'Shea, half angrily — "may I never, if he's not asleep — and snoring! These Saxons beat the world for stupidity."

The Member now suddenly bethought him that it would be a favourable moment to read his telegram, and so he tore open the envelope, and held it to the light. It was headed as usual, and addressed in full, showing that no parsimony defrauded him of his full title. The body of the despatch was, however, brief enough, and contained only one word, "Bosh!" It was clear, bold, and unmistakable "Bosh!" Could insolence go further than that? To send such a message a thousand miles, at the cost of one pound fourteen and sixpence!

"What the deuce? you've nearly upset the table!"

cried Heathcote, waking suddenly up, as O'Shea, with a passionate gesture, had thrown one of the decanters into the other's lap.

"I was asleep, like yourself, I suppose," said the Member, roughly. "I must say, we are neither of us the very liveliest company."

"It was that yarn of yours about attacking monkeys with a poker, or some stuff of that kind, set me off," yawned Heathcote, drearily. "I had not felt the least sleepy till then."

"Here, let us fill our glasses, and drink to the jolly time that is coming for us," said O'Shea, with all his native recklessness.

"With all my heart; but I wish I could guess from what quarter it's coming," said Heathcote, despondingly.

If neither felt much disposed to converse, they each drank deeply, and although scarcely more than a word or two would pass between them, they sat thus, hour after hour, till it was long past midnight.

It was after a long silence between them that Heathcote said, "I never tried so hard in my life to get drunk, without success. I find it won't do, though; I'm just as clear-headed and as low-spirited as when I started."

"Bosh!" muttered O'Shea, half dreamily.

"It's no such thing!" retorted Heathcote. "At any ordinary time one bottle of that strong Burgundy would have gone to my head; and see, now I don't feel it."

"May be you're fretting about something. Its perhaps a weight on your heart —"

"That's it!" sighed out the other, as though the very avowal were an inexpressible relief to him.

"Is it for a woman?" asked O'Shea.

The other nodded, and then leaned his head on his hand.

"Upon my conscience, I sometimes think they're worse than the Jews," said the Member, violently; "and there's no being 'up to them.'"

"It's our own fault, then," cried Heathcote; "because we never play fairly with them."

"Bosh!" muttered O'Shea again.

"I defy you to deny it," cried he, angrily.

"I'd like a five-pound note to argue it either way," said O'Shea.

As if offended by the levity of the speech, Heathcote turned away and said nothing.

"When you get down to Rome, and have some fun over those ox-fences, you'll forget all about her, whoever she is," said O'Shea.

"I'm for England to-morrow, and for India next week, if they'll have me."

"Well, if that's not madness —"

"No, Sir, it is not," broke in Heathcote, angrily; "nor will I permit you or any other man to call it so."

"What I meant was, that when a fellow had *your* prospects before him, India oughtn't to tempt him, even with the offer of the Governor-Generalship."

"Forgive me my bad temper, like a good fellow," cried Heathcote, grasping the other's hand; "but, in honest truth, I have no prospects, no future, and there is not a more hopeless wretch to be found than the man before you."

O'Shea was very near saying "Bosh!" once more, but he coughed it under.

Like all bashful men who have momentarily given way to impatience, Charles Heathcote was over eager to obtain his companion's good will, and so he dashed at once into a full confession of all the difficulties that beset, and all the cares that surrounded, him. O'Shea had never known accurately, till now, the amount of May Leslie's fortune, nor how completely she was the mistress of her own fate. Neither had he ever heard of that strange provision in the will which imposed a forfeit upon her if unwilling to accept Charles Heathcote as her husband — a condition which he shrewdly judged to be the very surest of all ways to prevent their marriage.

"And so you released her?" cried he, as Heathcote finished his narrative.

"Released her! No. I never considered that she was bound. How could I?"

"Upon my conscience," muttered the O'Shea, "it is a hard case — a mighty hard case — to see one's way in; for if, as you say, it's not a worthy part for a man to compel a girl to be his wife just because her father put it in his will, it's very cruel to lose her only because she has a fine property."

"It is for no such reason," broke in Heathcote, half angrily. "I was unwilling — I am unwilling — that May Leslie should be bound by a contract she never shared in."

"That's all balderdash!" cried O'Shea, with energy.

"What do you mean, Sir?" retorted the other, passionately.

"What I mean is this," resumed he: "that it's all balderdash to talk of the hardship of doing things that

we never planned out for ourselves. Sure, ain't we doing them every moment of our lives? Ain't I doing something because you contrived it? and ain't you doing something else because I left it in your way?"

"It comes to this, then, that you'd marry a girl who didn't care for you, if the circumstances were such as to oblige her to accept you?"

"Not absolutely — not unreservedly," replied O'Shea.

"Well, what is the reservation? Let us hear it."

"Her fortune ought to be suitable."

"Oh, this is monstrous!"

"Hear me out before you condemn me. In marriage, as in everything else, you must take it out in malt or in meal; don't fancy that you're going to get love and money too. It's only in novels such luck exists."

"I'm very glad I do not share your sentiments," said Charles, sternly.

"They're practical anyway. But now to another point. Here we are, sitting by the fire in all frankness and candour. Answer me fairly two questions: Have you given up the race?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, have you any objection if I enter for the stakes myself?"

"You! Do you mean that you would propose for May Leslie?" cried he, in amazement.

"I do; and, what's more, I don't despair of success, either."

An angry flush rose to Heathcote's face, and for a moment it seemed as if his passion was about to break forth; but he mastered it, and, rising slowly, said: "If I thought such a thing possible, it would very soon

cure me of *one* sorrow." After a pause, he added: "As for *me*, I have no permission to give or to withhold. Go, by all means, and make your offer. I only ask one thing: it is, that you will honestly tell me afterwards how it has been received."

"That I pledge my word to. Where do you stop in Paris?"

"At the Windsor."

"Well, you shall have a despatch from me, or see myself there, by Saturday evening; one or the other I swear to."

"Agreed. I'll not wish you success, for that would be hypocritical, but I'll wish you well over it!" And with this speech, uttered in a tone of jeering sarcasm, Heathcote said good-by, and departed.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Public Servant Abroad.

WE scarcely thought that the distinguished public servant, Mr. Ogden, was likely to occupy once more any portion of our readers' attention; and yet it so fell out that this useful personage, being on the Continent getting up his Austria and Northern Italy for the coming session, received a few lines from the Earl of Somerville, half mandatory, half entreating, asking him to find out the young Marquis of Agincourt, and take him back with him to England.

Now the Earl was a great man, for he was father-in-law of a Cabinet Minister, and related to half the leaders of the party, so that Mr. Ogden, however little the mission suited his other plans, was fain at once to accept it, and set out in search of his charge.

We need not follow him in his pursuit through Lombardy and the Legations, down to Tuscany and Lucca, which latter city he reached at the close of a cold and dreary day of winter, cheered to him, however, by the certainty that he had at length come up with the object of his chase.

It was a habit with Quackinboss, whenever he sent out Layton's servant on an errand, to leave the house door ajar, that the sick man might not be disturbed by the loud summons of the bell; and so, on the evening in question, was it found by Mr. Ogden, who, after some gentle admonitions by his knuckles, and some preparatory coughs, at last groped his way into the interior, and eventually entered the spacious sitting-room. Quackinboss had dined, and was seated at his wine beside an ample fireplace, with a blazing wood fire. An old-fashioned screen sheltered him from the draught of the ill-fitting windows, while a comfortable buffalo rug was stretched under his feet. The Colonel was in his second cigar, and in the drowsy mood of its easy enjoyment, when the harsh accents of Mr. Ogden's voice startled him, by asking, "Can you inform me if Lord Agincourt lives here?"

"You're a Britisher now, I expect?" said the Colonel, as he slowly puffed out a long volume of smoke, but never moved from his seat.

"My question having the precedence, Sir, it will be, perhaps, more regular to answer it first," said Ogden, with a slow pertinacity.

"Well, I ain't quite sure o' that, stranger," drawled out the other. "Mine was a sort of an amendment, and so might be put before the original motion."

The remark chimed in well with the humour of one

never indisposed to word-fencing, and so he deferred to the suggestion, told his name and his object in coming, "And now, Sir," added he, "I hope not to be deemed indiscreet in asking an equal candour from you."

"You ain't a doctor?" asked Quackinboss.

"No, Sir; not a physician, at least."

"That's a pity," said Quackinboss, slowly, as he brushed the ashes off his cigar. "Help yourself, stranger; that's claret, t'other's the country wine, and this is cognac — all three bad o' their kind; but, as they say here to everything, 'Come si fa, eh? Come si fa!'"

"It is not from any disparagement of your hospitality, Sir," said Ogden, somewhat pompously, "that I am forced to recal you to my first question."

"Come si fa!" repeated Quackinboss, still ruminating over the philosophy of that expression, one of the very few he had ever succeeded in committing to memory.

"Am I to conclude, Sir, that you decline giving me the information I ask?"

"I ain't in a witness-box, stranger. I'm a sittin' at my own fireside. I'm a smokin' my Virginian, where I've a right to, and if *you* choose to come in neighbourly-like, and take a liquor with me, we'll talk it over, whatever it is; but if you think to come Holy Office and the Inquisition over Shaver Quackinboss, you've caught the wrong squirrel by the tail, Britisher, you have!"

"I must say, Sir, you have put a most forced and unfair construction upon a very simple circumstance. I asked you if the Marquis of Agincourt resided here?"

"And so you ain't a doctor?" said Quackinboss, pensively.

"No, Sir; I have already told you as much."

"Bred to the law, belike?"

"I *have* studied, Sir, but not practised as a lawyer."

"Well, now, I expected you was!" said Quackinboss, with an air of self-satisfaction. "You chaps betray yourselves sooner than any other class in all creation; as Flay Harris says: 'A lawyer is a fellow won't drink out of the bung-hole, but must always be for tapping the cask for himself.' You ain't long in these parts?"

"No, Sir; a very short time indeed," said Ogden, drearily.

"You needn't sigh about it, stranger, though it is main dull in these diggin's! Here's a people that don't understand human natur'. What I mean, Sir, is, human natur' means going ahead; doin' a somewhat your father and your grandfather never so much as dreamt of. But what are these critturs about? Jest showin' the great things that was done centeries before they was born — what pictures, and statues, and monuments their own ancestors could make, and of which they are jest showmen, nothing more!"

"The Arts are Italy's noblest inheritance," said Ogden, sententiously.

"That ain't my platform, stranger. Civilisation never got anything from painters or sculptors. They never taught mankind to be truthful, or patient, or self-denyin', or charitable. You may look at a bronze Hercules till you're black in the face, and it will never make you give a cent to a lame cripple. I'll go further again, stranger, and I'll say that there ain't anything has thrown so many stumblin'-blocks before progress as what you call the Arts, for there ain't the equal o'

them to make people idlers. What's all that loafing about galleries, I ask ye, but the worst of all idling? If you want them sort of emotions, go to the real article, Sir. Look at an hospital, that's more life-like than Gerard Dow and his dropsical woman — ay, and may touch your heart, belike, before you get away."

"Though your conversation interests me much, Sir, you will pardon my observing that I feel myself an intruder."

"No you ain't; I'm jest in a talkin' humour, and I'd rather have *you* than that Italian crittur, as don't understand me."

"Even the flattery of your observation, Sir, cannot make me forget that another object claims my attention."

"For I've remarked," resumed Quackinboss, as if in continuation of his speech, "that a foreigner, that don't know English, wearies after a while in listenin', even though you're a tellin' him very interestin' things."

"I perceive, Sir," said Ogden, rising, "that I have certainly been mistaken in the address. I was told that at the Palazzo Barsotti ——"

"Well, you're jest there; that's what they call this ramshackle old crazy consarn. Their palaces, bein' main like their nobility, would be all the better for a little washin' and smartenin' up."

"You can perhaps, however, inform me where Lord Agincourt *does* live?"

"Well, he lives, as I may say, a little promiscuous. If he ain't *here*, it's because he's *there*! You understand?"

"I cannot say very confidently that I do understand," said Ogden, slowly.

"It was well as you wasn't a practisin' lawyer, Britisher, for you ain't smart! that's a fact. No, Sir; you ain't smart!"

"Your countrymen's estimate of that quality has a high standard, Sir," said Ogden, haughtily.

"What do you mean by my countrymen?" asked the other, quickly.

"I ventured to presume you were an American," said Ogden, with a supercilious smile.

"Well, stranger, you were main right; though darn me con-siderable if I know how you discovered it. Don't you be a goin', now that we're gettin' friendly together. Set down a bit. Maybe you'd taste a morsel of something?"

"Excuse me; I have just dined."

"Well, mix a summut in your glass. It's a rare pleasure to me, stranger, to have a chat with a man as talks like a Christian. I'm tired of 'come si fa' — that's fact, Sir."

"I regret that I cannot profit by your polite invitation," said Ogden, bowing stiffly. "I had been directed to this house as the residence of Lord Agincourt and his tutor, and as neither of them live here ——"

"Who told you that? There's one of them a-bed in that room there; he's caught swamp-fever, and it's gone up to the head. He's the tutor — poor fellow."

"And the Marquis?"

"The Marquis! he's a small parcel to have such a big direction on him, ain't he? He's at a Villa, a few miles off; but he'll be over here to-morrow morning."

"You are quite sure of that?" asked Ogden.

"Yes, Sir," said Quackinboss, drinking off his glass, and nodding, in token of salutation.

"I must beg you to accept my excuses for this intrusion on my part," began Ogden.

"Jest set you down there again; there's a point I'd like to be cleared up about. I'm sure you'll not refuse me. Jest set down."

Ogden resumed his seat, although with an air and manner of no small disinclination.

"No wine, thank you. Excuse me," said he, stiffly, as Quackinboss tried to fill his glass.

"You remarked a while ago," said Quackinboss, slowly, and like a man weighing all his words, "that I was an American born. Now, Sir, it ain't a very likely thing that any man who was ever raised in the States is a goin' to deny it. It ain't, I say, very probable as he'd say I'm a Chinese, or a Mexican, or a Spaniard; no, nor a Britisher. Whatever we do in this life, stranger, one thing, I suppose, is pretty certain — we don't say the worst of ourselves. Ain't that your platform, Sir?"

"I agree to the general principle."

"Agreein', then, to the gen'ral principle, here's where we go next, for I ain't a goin' to let you off, Britisher — I've got a harpoon in you now, and I'll tow you after me into shoal water; see if I don't. Agreein', as we say, to the gen'ral principle, that no man likes to make his face blacker than it need be, what good could it do me to say I wasn't born a free citizen of the freest country of the universe?"

"I am, really, at a loss to see how I am interested in the matter. I have not, besides, that perfect leisure abstract discussion requires. You will forgive me if I take my leave." He moved hastily towards the door as he spoke, followed by Quackinboss, whose voice had

now assumed the full tones and the swelling modulations of public oratory.

"That great land, sanctified by the blood of the pilgrim fathers, and whose proudest boast it is, that from the first day, when the star-spangled banner of Freedom dallied with the wind and scorned the sun, waving its barred folds over the heads of routed enemies — to that glorious consummation, when, from the rugged plains of New England to the golden groves of Florida ——"

"Good-by, Sir — good evening," said Ogden, passing out and gaining the landing-place.

"— One universal shout, floating over the Atlantic waters, proclaimed to the Old World that the 'Young' was alive and kickin' ——"

"Good night," cried Ogden, from the bottom of the stairs; and Quackinboss re-entered his chamber and banged the door after him, muttering something to himself about Lexington and Concord, Columbus and Quincey Adams.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Broken Ties.

It was a sorrowful morning at the Villa Caprini on the 22nd of November. Agincourt had come to take his last farewell of his kind friends, half heart-broken that he was not permitted even to see poor Layton before he went. Quackinboss, however, was obdurate on the point, and would suffer no one to pass the sick man's door. Mr. Ogden sat in the carriage as the boy dashed into the house to say "Good-by." Room after room he searched in vain. No one to be met with.

What could it mean? — the drawing-room, the library, all empty!

"Are they all out, Fenton?" cried he, at last.

"No, my Lord, Sir William was here a moment since, Miss Leslie is in her room, and Mrs. Morris, I think, is in the garden."

To the garden he hurried off at once, and just caught sight of Mrs. Morris and Clara, as, side by side, they turned the angle of an alley.

"At last!" cried he, as he came up with them. "At last I have found some one. Here have I been this half-hour in search of you all, over house and grounds. Why, what's the matter? — what makes you look so grave?"

"Don't you know? — haven't you heard?" cried Mrs. Morris, with a sigh.

"Heard what?"

"Heard that Charles has gone off — started for England last night, with the intention of joining the first regiment ordered for India."

"I wish to Heaven he'd have taken me with him!" cried the boy, eagerly.

"Very possibly," said she, dryly; "but Charles was certainly to blame for leaving a home of happiness and affection in this abrupt way. I don't see how poor Sir William is ever to get over it, not to speak of leaving May Leslie. I hope, Agincourt, this is not the way you'll treat the young lady you're betrothed to."

"I'll never get myself into any such scrape, depend on't. Poor Charlie!"

"Why not poor May?" whispered Mrs. Morris.

"Well, poor May, too, if she cared for him; but I don't think she did."

"Oh, what a shame to say so! I'm afraid you young gentlemen are brought up in great heresies now-a-days, and don't put any faith in love."

Had the boy been an acute observer, he would have marked how little the careless levity of the remark coincided with the assumed sadness of her former manner, but he never noticed this.

"Well," broke in the boy, bluntly, "why not marry him, if she cared for him? I don't suppose you'll ask me to believe that Charlie would have gone away if she hadn't refused him?"

"What a wily serpent it is!" said Mrs. Morris, smiling; "wanting to wring confidences from me whether I will or no."

"No. I'll be hanged if I *am* wily — am I, Clara?"

What Clara answered was not very distinct, for her face was partly covered with her handkerchief.

"There, you see Clara is rather an unhappy witness to call to character. You'd better come to me for a reputation," said Mrs. Morris, laughingly.

"It's no matter, I'm going away now," said he, sorrowfully.

"Going away — where?"

"Going back to England; they've sent a man to capture me, as if I was a wild beast, and he's there at the door now — precious impatient, too, I promise you, because I'm keeping the post-horses waiting."

"Oh, make him come in to luncheon. He's a gentleman — isn't he?"

"I should think he is! A great political swell, too, a something in the Admiralty, or the Colonies, or wherever it is."

"Well, just take Clara, and she'll find out May for

you, and send your travelling companion into the garden here. I'll do the honours to him till lunch-time." And Mrs. Morris now turned into a shady walk, to think over what topics she should start for the amusement of the great official from Downing-street.

If we were going to tell tales of her — which we are not — we might reveal how it happened that she had seen a good deal of such sort of people, at one era of her life, living in a Blue-Book atmosphere, and hearing much out of "Hansard." We merely mention the fact; as to the how, it is not necessary to refer to it. Not more are we bound to say why she did not retain for such high company what, in French, is called, "the most distinguished consideration" — why, on the contrary, she thought and pronounced them the most insupportable of all bores. Our readers cannot fail to have remarked and appreciated the delicate reserve we have unvaryingly observed towards this lady — a respectful courtesy that no amount of our curiosity could endanger. Now, "charming women," of whom Mrs. M. was certainly one, have a great fondness for little occasional displays of their fascinations upon strangers. Whether it is that they are susceptible of those emotions of vanity that sway smaller natures, or whether it be merely to keep their fascinations from rusting by want of exercise, is hard to say, but so is the fact, and the enjoyment is all the higher when, by any knowledge of a speciality, they can astonish their chance acquaintance. For what Lord Agincourt had irreverently styled the "great political swell," she therefore prepared herself, with such memories as some years of life had stored for her. "He'll wonder," thought she, "where I came by all my Downing-street

slang. I'll certainly puzzle him with my cant of office." And so thinking, she walked briskly along in the clear frosty air over the crisped leaves that strewed the walk, till she beheld a person approaching from the extreme end of the alley.

The distance between them was yet considerable, and yet how was it that she seemed to falter in her steps, and suddenly, clasping her heart with both hands, appeared seized with a sort of convulsion? At the same instant she threw a terrified glance on every side, and looked like one prepared for sudden flight. To these emotions, more rapid in their course than it has taken time to describe them, succeeded a cold, determined calm, in which her features regained their usual expression, though marked by a paleness like death.

The stranger came slowly forward, examining the trees and flowers as he passed along, and peering with his double eye-glass to read the names attached to whatever was rarest. Affecting to be gathering flowers for a bouquet, she stooped frequently, till the other came near, and then, as he removed his hat to salute her, she threw back her veil and stood, silent, before him.

"Madam! Madam!" cried he, in a voice of such intense agony as showed that he was almost choked for utterance. "How is this, Madam?" said he, in a tone of indignant demand. "How is this?"

"I have really no explanation to offer, Sir," said she, in a cold, low voice. "My astonishment is great as your own; this meeting is not of my seeking. I need scarcely say so much."

"I do not know that! — by Heaven I do not!" cried he, in a passion.

"You are surely forgetting, Sir, that we are no longer anything to each other, and thus forgetting the deference due to me as a stranger?"

"I neither forget nor forgive!" said he, sternly.

"Happily, Sir, you will not be called upon to do either. I no longer bear your name —"

"Oh that you had never borne it!" cried he, in agony.

"There is at least one sentiment we agree in, Sir — would that I never had!" said she, and a slight — very slight — tremor shook the words as she spoke them.

"Tell me at once, Madam, what do you mean by this surprise? I know all your skill in *accidents* — what does this one portend?"

"You are too flattering, Sir, believe me," said she, with an easy smile. "I have plotted nothing — I have nothing to plot — at least in which you are concerned. The unhappy bond that once united us is loosed for ever; but I do not see that even harsh memories are to suggest bad manners."

"I am no stranger to your flippancy, Madam. You have made me acquainted with all your merits."

"You were going to say virtues, George — confess you were?" said she, coquettishly.

"Gracious mercy, woman! can you dare —"

"My dear Mr. Ogden," broke she in, gently, "I can dare to be that which you have just told me was impossible for you — forgetful and forgiving."

"Oh, Madam, this is indeed generous!" said he, with a bitter mockery.

"Well, Sir, it were no bad thing if there were a little generosity between us. Don't fancy that all the forgiveness should come from *you*; don't imagine that *I* am not plaintiff as well as defendant." Then, suddenly changing her tone to one of easy indifference, she said, "And so your impression is, Sir, that the Cabinet will undergo no change?"

She looked hurriedly round as she spoke, and saw Sir William Heathcote coming rapidly towards them.

"Sir William, let me present to you Mr. Ogden, a name you must be familiar with in the debates," said she, introducing them.

"I hope Lord Agincourt has not been correct in telling me that you are pressed for time, Mr. Ogden. I trust that you will give us at least a day."

"Not an hour, not a minute, Sir. I mean," added he, ashamed of his violence, "I have not an instant to spare."

"You'll scarcely profit by leaving us this morning," resumed Sir William. "The torrents between this and Massa are all full, and perfectly impassable."

"Pray accept Sir William's wise counsels, Sir," said she, with the sweetest of all smiles.

A stern look, and a muttered something inaudible, was all his reply.

"What a dreary servitude must political life be, when one cannot bestow a passing hour upon society," said she, plaintively.

"Mr. Ogden could tell us that the rewards are worthy of the sacrifices," said Sir William, blandly.

"Are they better than the enjoyments of leisure, the delights of friendship, and the joys of home?" asked she, half earnestly.

"By Heaven, Madam!" cried Ogden, and then stopped; when Sir William broke in:

"Mrs. Morris is too severe upon public men. They are rarely called on to make such sacrifices as she speaks of."

While thus talking, they had reached the terrace in front of the house, where Agincourt was standing between May and Clara, holding a hand of each.

"Are you ready?" asked Ogden, abruptly.

"Ready; but very sorry to go," said the boy, bluntly.

"May we not offer you some luncheon, Mr. Ogden? You will surely take a glass of wine with us?"

"Nothing, Sir, nothing. Nothing beneath the same roof with this woman," muttered he, below his breath; but her quick ears caught the words, and she whispered,

"An unkind speech, George — most unkind!"

While Agincourt was taking his last affectionate farewells of the girls and Sir William, Mr. Ogden had entered the carriage, and thrown himself deeply back into a corner. Mrs. Morris, however, leaned over the door, and looked calmly, steadfastly at him.

"Won't you say good-by?" said she, softly.

A look of insulting contempt was all his answer.

"Not one kind word at parting? Well, I am better than you; here's my hand." And she held out her fair and taper fingers towards him.

"Fiend — not woman!" was his muttered expression as he turned away.

"And a pleasant journey," said she, as if finishing a speech; while turning, she gave her hand to Agincourt: "Yes, to be sure, you may take a boy's privilege, and

give me a kiss at parting," said she; while the youth, blushing a deep crimson, availed himself of the permission.

"There they go," said Sir William, as the horses rattled down the avenue; "and a finer boy and a grumpier companion it has rarely been my lot to meet with. A thousand pardons, my dear Mrs. Morris, if he is a friend of yours."

"I knew him formerly," said she, coldly. "I can't say I ever liked him."

"I remember his name," said Sir William, in a sort of hesitating way; "there was some story or other about him — either his wife ran away, or he eloped with somebody's wife."

"I'm sure it must have been the former," said Mrs. Morris, laughing. "Poor gentleman he does not give one the impression of a Lothario. But who have we here? The O'Shea, I declare! Look to your heart, May, dearest; take my word for it, he never turned out so smartly without dreams of conquest." Mr. O'Shea cantered up at the same moment, followed by Joe in a most accurate "get-up" as groom, and dismounting, advanced, hat in hand, to salute the party.

There are blank days in this life of ours in which even a pleasant visitor is a bore — times in which dulness and seclusion are the best company, and it is anything but a boon to be broken in upon. It was the O'Shea's evil fortune to have fallen on one of these. It was in vain he recounted his club gossip about politics and party to Sir William — in vain he told Mrs. Morris the last touching episode of town scandal — in vain, even, did he present a fresh bouquet of lily-of-the-valley to May; each in turn passed him on to the other, till he

found himself alone with Clara, who sat sorrowfully over the German lesson Layton was wont to help her with.

"What's the matter with you all?" cried he, half angrily as he walked the room from end to end. "Has there any misfortune happened?"

"Charles has left us, Agincourt is just gone, the pleasant house is broken up; is not that enough to make us sad?" said she, sorrowfully.

"If you ever read Tommy Moore you'd know it was only another reason to make the most of the friends that were left behind," said he, adjusting his cravat at the glass, and giving himself a leer of knowing recognition. "That's the time of day, Clara!"

She looked at him somewhat puzzled to know whether he had alluded to his sentiment, his whiskers, which he was now caressing, or the French clock on the mantelpiece.

"Is that one of Layton's?" said he, carelessly turning over a water-coloured sketch of a Lucchese landscape.

"Yes," said she, replacing it carefully in a portfolio.

"He won't do many more of them, I suspect."

"How so? — why? — what do you mean?" cried she, grasping his arm, while a death-like paleness spread over her features.

"Just that he's going as fast as he can. What's the mischief! is it fainting she is?"

With a low, weak sigh the girl had relaxed her hold, and, staggering backwards, sunk senseless on the floor. O'Shea tugged violently at the bell: the servant rushed in, and immediately after Mrs. Morris herself; but by this time Clara had regained consciousness, and was able to utter a few words.

"I was telling her of Layton's being so ill," began he, in a whisper, to Mrs. Morris.

"Of course you were," said she, pettishly. "For an inconvenience, or an indiscretion, what can equal an Irishman?"

The speech was uttered as she led her daughter away, leaving the luckless O'Shea alone to ruminate over the politeness.

"There it is!" cried he, indignantly. "From the *Times*, down to the widow Morris, it's the same story — the Irish! the Irish! — and it's no use fighting against it. Smash the Minister in Parliament, and you'll be told it was a speech more adapted to an Irish House of Commons; break the Sikh squares with the bayonet, and the cry is 'Tipperary tactics.' Isn't it a wonder how we bear it! I ask any man, did he ever hear of patience like ours?"

It was just as his indignation had reached this crisis that May Leslie hurriedly came into the room to search for a locket Clara had dropped when she fainted. While O'Shea assisted her in her search, he bethought whether the favourable moment had not arrived to venture on the great question of his own fate. It was true, he was still smarting under a national disparagement; but the sarcasm gave a sort of reckless energy to his purpose, and he muttered, "Now, or never, for it!"

"I suppose it was a keepsake," said he, as he peered under the tables after the missing object.

"I believe so. At least, the poor child attaches great value to it."

"Oh dear!" sighed O'Shea. "If it was an old bod-

kin that was given me by one I loved, I'd go through fire and water to get possession of it."

"Indeed!" said she, smiling at the unwonted energy of the protestation.

"I would," repeated he, more solemnly. "It's not the value of the thing itself I'd ever think of. There's the ring was wore by my great-grandmother Ram, of Ram's Mountain, and though it's a rose-amethyst, worth three hundred guineas, it's only as a family token it has merit in my eyes."

Now this speech, discursive though it seemed, was artfully intended by the Honourable Member, for while incidentally throwing out claims to blood and an ancestry, it cunningly insinuated what logicians call the "*à fortiori*" — how the man who cared so much for his grandmother would necessarily adore his wife.

"We must give it up, I see," said May. "She has evidently not lost it here."

"And it was a heart, you say!" sighed the Member.

"Yes, a little golden heart with a ruby clasp."

"Oh dear! And to think that I've lost my own in the self-same spot!"

"Yours! Why, had you a locket, too?"

"No, my angel!" cried he, passionately, as he clasped her hand, and fell on his knee before her, "but my heart — a heart that lies under your feet this minute! There, don't turn away — don't! May I never, if I know what's come over me these two months back! Night or day, it is the one image is always before me — one voice always in my ears."

"How tiresome that must be," said she, laughing.

merrily. "There, pray let go my hand; this is only folly, and not in very good taste, either."

"Folly, you call it? Love is madness, if you like. Out of this spot I'll never stir till I know my fate. Say the word, and I'm the happiest man or the most abject creature — You're laughing again — I wonder how you can be so cruel!"

"Really, Sir, if I regard your conduct as only absurd, it is a favourable view of it," said she, angrily.

"Do, darling of my soul! light of my eyes! loadstar of my whole destiny! — do take a favourable view of it," said he, catching at her last words.

"I have certainly given you no pretence to make me ridiculous, Sir," said she, indignantly.

"Ridiculous! ridiculous!" cried he, in utter amazement. "Sure it's my hand I'm offering you. What were you thinking of?"

"I believe I apprehend you aright, Sir, and have only to say, that, however honoured by your proposal, it is one I must decline."

"Wouldn't you tell me why, darling? Wouldn't you say your reasons, my angel? Don't shake your head, my adored creature, but turn this way, and say, 'Gorman, your affection touches me: I see your love for me; but I'm afraid of you; you're light, and fickle, and inconstant; you're spoiled by flattery among the women, and deference and respect amongst the men. What can I hope from a nature so pampered?'"

"No, in good truth, Mr. O'Shea, not one of these objections have occurred to me; my answer was dictated by much narrower and more selfish considerations. At all events, Sir, it is final; and I need only appeal to your sense of good-breeding never to resume a subject

I have told you is distasteful to me." And with a heightened colour, and a glance which certainly betokened no softness, she turned away and left him.

"Distasteful! distasteful!" muttered he over her last words. "Women! women! women! there's no knowing ye — the devil a bit! What you'd like, and what you wouldn't, is as great a secret as the philosopher's stone! Heigho!" sighed he, as he opened his cravat, and drew in a long breath. "I didn't take a canter like that, these five years, and it has sent all the blood to my head. I hope she'll not mention it. I hope she won't tell it to the widow," muttered he, as he walked to the window for air. "*She's* the one would take her own fun out of it. Upon my conscience, this is mighty like apoplexy," said he, as, sitting down, he fanned himself with a book.

"Poor Mr. O'Shea!" said a soft voice; and, looking up, he saw Mrs. Morris, as, leaning over the back of his chair, she bent on him a look half quizzical and half compassionate. "Poor Mr. O'Shea!"

"Why so? How?" asked he, with an affected jocularly.

"Well," said she, with a faint sigh, "you're not the first man has drawn a blank in the lottery."

"I suppose not," muttered he, half sulkily.

"Nor will it prevent you trying your luck another time," said she, in the same tone.

"What did she say? How did she mention it?" whispered he, confidentially.

"She didn't believe you were serious at first; she thought it a jest. Why did you fall on your knees? it's never done now, except on the stage."

"How did *I* know that?" cried he, peevishly. "One

ought to be proposing every day of the week to keep up with the fashions."

"If you had taken a chair at her side, a little behind hers, so as not to scrutinise her looks too closely, and stolen your hand gently forward, as if to touch the embroidery she was at work on, and then, at last, her hand, letting your voice grow lower and softer at each word, till the syllables would seem to drop, distilled, from your heart ——"

"The devil a bit of that I could do at all," cried he, impatiently. "If I can't make the game off the balls," said he, taking a metaphor from his billiard experiences, "I'm good for nothing. But will she come round? Do you think she'll change?"

"No; I'm afraid not," said she, shaking her head.

"Faix! she might do worse," said he, resolutely. "Do you know that she might do worse? If the mortgages was off, O'Shea-Ville is seventeen hundred a year; and, for family, we beat the county."

"I've no doubt of it," replied she, calmly.

"There was ancestors of mine hanged by Henry the Second, and one was strangled in prison two reigns before," said he, proudly. "The O'Sheas was shedding their blood for Ireland eight centuries ago! Did you ever hear of Mortagh Dhub O'Shea?"

"Never!" said she, mournfully.

"There it is," sighed he, drearily; "mushrooms is bigger, now-a-days, than oak-trees." And with this dreary reflection he arose and took his hat.

"Won't you dine here? I'm sure they expect you to stop for dinner," said she; but whether a certain devilry in her laughing eye made the speech seem insincere, or that his own distrust prompted it, he said,

"No, I'll not stop; I couldn't eat a bit if I did."

"Come, come, you mustn't take it to heart in this way," said she, coaxingly.

"Do you think you could do anything for me?" said he, taking her hand in his; "for, to tell truth, it's my pride is hurt. As we say in the House of Commons, now that my name is on the Bill, I'd like to carry it through. You understand that feeling?"

"Perhaps I do," said she, doubtfully, while, throwing herself into a chair, she leaned back, so as to display a little more than was absolutely and indispensably necessary of a beautifully rounded ankle and instep. Mr. O'Shea saw it, and marked it. There was no denying she was pretty — pretty, too, in those feminine and delicate graces which have special attractions for men somewhat hackneyed in life, and a "little shoulder-sore with the collar" of the world. As the Member gazed at the silky curls of her rich auburn hair, the long fringes that shadowed her fair cheeks, and the graceful lines of her beautiful figure, he gave a sigh — one of those sighs a man inadvertently heaves when contemplating some rare object in a shop-window, which his means forbid him to purchase. It was only as he heaved a second and far deeper one, that she looked up, and with an arch drollery of expression all her own, said, as if answering him, "Yes, you are quite right; but you know you couldn't afford it."

"What do you mean — not afford what?" cried he, blushing deeply.

"Nor could *I* either," continued she, heedless of his interruption.

"Faith, then," cried he, with energy, "it was just what I was thinking of."

"But, after all," said she, gravely, it wouldn't do; "privateers must never sail in company. I believe there's nothing truer than that!"

He continued to look at her, with a strange mixture of admiration and astonishment.

"And so," said she, rising, "let us part good friends, who may hope each to serve the other one of these days. Is that a bargain?" And she held out her hand.

"I swear to it!" cried he, pressing his lips to her fingers. "And now that you know my sentiments —"

¶ "Hush!" cried she, with a gesture of warning, for she heard the voices of servants in the corridor. "Trust me; and good-by!"

"One ought always to have an Irishman amongst one's admirers," said she, as, once more alone, she arranged her ringlets before the glass; "if there's any fighting to be done, he's sure not to fail you."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Day in Early Spring.

THAT twilight of the year called spring, most delightful of all seasons, is scarcely known in Italy. Winter dies languidly away, and summer bursts forth at once, and in a few days the trees are clothed in full foliage, the tall grass is waving, and panting lizards sun themselves on the rocks over which so lately the mountain torrent was foaming. There are, however, a few days of transition, and these are inexpressibly delicious. The balmy air scented with the rose and the violet stirs gently through the olive-trees, shaking the golden limes amidst the dark leaves, and carrying away

the sweet perfume on its breath; rivulets run bright and clear through rocky channels, mingling their murmurs with the early cicada. The acacia sheds its perfume on the breeze so faint, as though it loved to linger on its way; and so, above, the lazy clouds hang upon the mountains, or float in fragments out to sea, as day wears on. What vitality there is in it all! — the rustling leaves, the falling water, the chirping birds, the softly plashing tide, all redolent of that happy season — the year's bright youth.

On such a day as this Herbert Layton strolled languidly through the grounds of Marlia. Three months of severe illness had worn him to a shadow, and he walked with the debility of one who had just escaped from a sick-room. The place was now deserted. The Heathcotes had gone to Rome for the winter, and the Villa was shut up and untenanted. It had been a cherished wish of poor Layton to visit the spot as soon as he could venture abroad; and Quackinboss, the faithful friend who had nursed him through his whole illness, had that day yielded to his persuasion and brought him there.

Who could have recognised the young and handsome youth in the broken-down, feeble, careworn man who now leaned over the palings of a little flower-garden, and gazed mournfully at a rustic bench beneath a lime-tree? Ay, there it was, in that very spot, one chapter of his life was finished. It was there she had refused him! He had no right, it is true, to have presumed so highly; there was nothing in his position to warrant such daring; but had she not encouraged him? That was the question; he believed so, at least. She had seen his devotion to her, and had not repulsed it.

Nay, more, she had suffered him to speak to her of feelings and emotions, of hopes, and fears, and ambitions, and only they are led to speak who talk to willing ears. Was this encouragement, or was it the compassionate pity of one, to him, so friendless and alone? May certainly knew that he loved her. She had even resented his little passing attentions to Mrs. Morris, and was actually jealous of the hours he bestowed on Clara; and yet, with all this, she had refused him, and told him not to hope that, even with time, her feeling towards him should change. "How could it be otherwise?" cried he to himself. "What was I, to have pretended so highly? Her husband should be able to offer a station superior to her own. So thought she, too, herself. How her words ring in my ears even yet: 'I *do* love rank!' Yes, it was there, on that spot, she said it. I made confession of my love, and she, in turn, told me of *hers*; and it was the world, the great and gorgeous prize, for which men barter everything. And then her cold smile, as I said, 'What is this same rank you prize so highly; can I not reach it — win it?' 'I will not waste youth in struggle and conflict,' said she. 'Ha!' cried I, 'these words are not yours. I heard them one short week ago. I know your teacher now. It was that false-hearted woman gave you these precious maxims. It was not thus you spoke or felt when first I knew you, May.' 'Is it not well,' said she, 'that we have each grown wiser?' I heard no more. I have no memory for the passionate words I uttered, the bitter reproaches I dared to make her. We parted in anger, never to meet again; and then poor Clara how I hear her faint, soft voice, as she found me sitting there alone, forsaken,

as she asked me, 'May I take these flowers?' and oh! how bitterly she wept as I snatched them from her hand, and scattered them on the ground, saying, 'They were not meant for you!' 'Let me have one, dear Alfred,' said she, just then; and she took up a little jasmine flower from the walk. 'Even that you despise to give is dear to *me*!' And so I kissed her on the forehead, and said, 'Good-by.' Two partings — never to meet again!" He covered his face with his hands, and his chest heaved heavily.

"It's main dreary in these diggin's here," cried Quackinboss, as he came up with long strides. "I've been a lookin' about on every side to find some one to open the house for us, but there ain't a crittur to be found. What's all this about? You haven't been a cryin', have you?"

Alfred turned away his head without speaking.

"I'll tell you what it is, Layton," said he, earnestly, "there's no manner of misfortune can befall in life that one need to fret over, but the death of friends, or sickness; and, as these are God's own doin', it is not for us to say they're wrong. Cheer up, man; you and I are a goin' to fight the world together."

"You have been a true friend to *me*," said Layton, grasping the other's hand, while he held his head still averted.

"Well, I mean to, that's a fact; but you must rouse yourself, lad. We're a goin' cross seas, and amongst fellows that, whatever they do with their spare time, give none of it to grief. Whoever saw John C. Colhoun cry? Did any one ever catch Dan Webster in tears?"

"I wasn't crying," said Layton; "I was only sad-

dened to see again a spot where I used to be so happy. I was thinking of bygones."

"I take it bygones is very little use if they don't teach us something more than to grieve over 'em; and, what's more, Layton — it sounds harsh to say it — but grief, when it's long persisted in, is downright selfishness, and nothing else."

Layton slipped his arm within the other's to move away, but as he did so he turned one last look towards the little garden.

"I see it all now," said Quackinboss, as they walked along; "you've been and met a sweetheart down here once on a time, that's it. She's been what they call cruel, or she's broke her word to you. Well, I don't suppose there's one man livin' — of what might be called real men — as hasn't had something of the same experience. Some has it early, some late, but it's like the measles, it pushes you main hard if you don't take it when you're young. There's no bending an old bough — you must break it."

There was a deep tone of melancholy in the way the last words were uttered that made Layton feel his companion was speaking from the heart.

"But it's all our own fault," broke in Quackinboss, quickly; "it all comes of the way we treat 'em."

"How do you mean?" asked Layton, eagerly.

"I mean," said the other, resolutely, "we treat 'em as reasonable beings, and they ain't. No, Sir, women is like Red-men, they ain't to be persuaded, or argued with, they're to be told what is right for 'em, and good for 'em, and that's all. What does all your courting and coaxing a gal, but make her think herself something better than all creation? Why, you keep a tellin'

her so all day, and she begins to believe it at last. Now, how much better and fairer to say to her, 'Here's how it is, miss, you've got to marry me, that's how it's fixed.' She'll understand that."

"But if she says, 'No, I won't'?"

"No, no," said Quackinboss, with a half-bitter smile, "she'll never say that to the man as knows how to tell her his mind. And as for that courtship, it's all a mistake. Why, women won't confess they like a man, just to keep the game a movin'. I'm blest if they don't like it better than marriage."

Layton gave a faint smile, but, faint as it was, Quackinboss perceived it, and said:

"Now, don't you go a persuadin' yourself these are all Yankee notions, and such-like. I'm a talkin' of human natur', and there ain't many as knows more of that article than Leonidas Shaver Quackinboss. All you Old-World folk make one great mistake, and nothing shows so clearly as how you're a worn-out race, used up, and done for. You live too much with your emotions and your feelin's. Have you never remarked that when the tap-root of a tree strikes down too far it gets into a cold soil? And from that day for'ard you'll never see fruit or blossom more. That's just the very thing you're a doin'. You ain't satisfied to be active, and thrivin', and healthful, but you must go a speculatin' about why you are this, and why you ain't t'other. Get work to do, Sir, and do it."

"It is what I intend," said Layton, in a low voice.

"There ain't nothing like labour," said Quackinboss, with energy; "work keeps the devil out of a man's mind, for, somehow, there's nothing that black fellow loves like loafing. And, whenever I see a great, tall,

well-whiskered chap leaning over a balcony in a grand silk dressing-gown, with a gold stitched cap on his head, and he a yawning, I say to myself, 'Maybe I don't know *who's* at your elbow now;' and when I see one of our strapping Western fellows, as he has given the last stroke of his hatchet to a pine-tree, and stands back to let it fall, wiping the honest sweat from his brow, as his eyes turn upward over the tree-tops to something higher than them, I say to my heart, 'All right there, he knows who it was gave him the strength to lay that sixty-foot stem so low.'"

"You say truly," muttered Layton.

"I know it, Sir; I've been a loafing myself these last three years, and I've run more to seed in that time than in all my precious life; but I mean to give it up."

"What are your plans?" asked Layton, not sorry to let the conversation turn away from himself and his own affairs.

"My plans! They are ours, I hope," said Quackinboss. "You're a coming out with me to the States, Sir. We fixed it all t'other night, I reckon! I'm a goin' to make your fortune; or, better still, to show you how to make it for yourself."

Layton walked on in moody silence, while Quackinboss, with all the zealous warmth of conviction, described the triumphs and success he was to achieve in the New World.

A very few words will suffice to inform our reader of all that he need know on this subject. During Layton's long convalescence, poor Quackinboss felt his companionable qualities sorely taxed. At first, indeed, his task was that of consoler, for he had to communicate the death of Alfred's mother, which occurred in

the early days of her son's illness. The Rector's letter, in conveying the sad tidings was everything that kindness and delicacy could dictate, and, with scarcely a reference to his own share in the benevolence, showed that all care and attention had waited upon her last hours. The blow, however, was almost fatal to Layton; and the thought of that forlorn, deserted death-bed, clung to him by day, and filled his dreams by night.

Quackinboss did his utmost, not very skilfully nor very adroitly, perhaps, but with a hearty sincerity, to combat this depression. He tried to picture a future of activity and exertion — a life of sterling labour. He placed before his companion's eyes the objects and ambitions men usually deem the worthiest, and endeavoured to give them an interest to him. Met in all his attempts by a dreary, hopeless indifference, the kind-hearted fellow reflected long and deeply over his next resource; and so one day, when Layton's recovered strength suggested a hope for the project, he gave an account of his own neglected youth, how, thrown when a mere boy upon the world, he had never been able to acquire more than a smattering of what others learn at school. "I had three books in the world, Sir — a Bible, Robinson Crusoe, and an odd volume of Wheatson's Algebra. And from a readin' and readin' of 'em over and over, I grew to blend 'em all up in my head together. And there was Friday, just as much a reality to me as Father Abraham; and I thought men kept all their trade reckonings by 'simple equations. I felt, in fact, as if there was no more than these three books in all creation, and out of them a man had to pick all the wisdom he could. Now, what I'm a thinkin' is,

that though I'm too old to go to school, maybe as how you'd not refuse to give me a helpin' hand, by readin' occasionally out of those languages I only know by name? 'Teachin' an old fellow like *me* is well-nigh out of the question; but when a man has got a long, hard-earned experience of human natur', it's a main pleasant thing to know that oftentimes the thoughts that he is struggling with have occurred to great minds, who know how to utter them; and so many an impression comes to be corrected, or mayhap confirmed, by those clever fellows, with their thoughtful heads."

There was one feature in the project which could not but gratify Layton; it enabled him to show his gratitude for the brotherly affection he had met with, and he accepted the suggestion at once. The first gleam of animation that had lighted his eyes for many a day was when planning out the line of reading he intended them to follow. Taking less eras of history than some of the great men who had illustrated them, he thought how such characters would be sure to interest one whose views of life were eminently practical, and so a great law-giver, a legislator, a great general, or orator, was each evening selected for their reading. If it were not out of our track we might tell here how much Layton was amused by the strange, shrewd commentaries of his companion on the characters of a classic age; or how he enjoyed the curious resemblances Quackinboss would discover between the celebrities of Athens and Rome and the great men of his own country. And many a time was the reader interrupted by such exclamations as, "Ay, Sir, just what J. Q. Adams would have said!" or, "That's the way our John Randolph would have fixed it!"

But Quackinboss was not satisfied with the pleasure thus afforded to himself, for, with native instinct, he began to think how all such stores of knowledge and amusement might be utilised for the benefit of the possessor.

"You must come to the States, Layton," he would say. "You must let our people hear these things. They're a main sharp, wide-awake folk, but they ain't posted up about Greeks and Romans. Just mind me, now, and you'll do a fine stroke of work, Sir. Give them one of those pleasant stories out of that fellow there, Herod — Herod — what d'ye call him?"

"Herodotus?"

"Ay, that's he; and then a slice out of one of those slapping speeches you read to me t'other night. I'm blessed if the fellow didn't lay it on like Point Dexter himself; and wind up all, with what we can't match, a comic scene from Aristophanes. You see I have his name all correct; and I ain't christened Shaver if you don't fill your hat with Yankee dollars in every second town of the Union."

Layton burst out into a hearty laugh at what seemed to him a project so absurd and impossible; but Quackinboss, with increased gravity, continued:

"Your British pride, mayhap, is offended by the thought of lecturin' to us Western folk; but I'm here to tell you, Sir, that our own first men — ay, and you'll not disparage *them* — are a doin' it every day. It's not play-actin' I'm speaking of. They don't go before a crowded theatre to play mimic with face, or look, or voice, or gesture. They've got a something to tell folk that's either ennobling or instructive. They've got a story of some man, who, without one

jot more of natural advantages than any of those listening there, made himself a name to be blessed and remembered for ages. They've to show what a thing a strong will is when united with an honest heart; and how no man, no matter how humble he be, need despair of being useful to his fellows. They've got many a lesson out of history to give a people who are just as ambitious, just as encroaching, and twice as warlike as the Athenians, about not neglecting private morality in the search after national greatness. What is the lecturer but the pioneer to the preacher. In clearing away ignorance and superstition, ain't he making way for the army of truth that's coming up? Now I tell you, Sir, that ain't a thing to be ashamed of!"

Layton was silent; not convinced, it is true, but restrained, from respect for the other's ardour, from venturing on a reply too lightly. Quackinboss, after a brief pause, went on:

"Well, it is possible what I said about the profit riled you. Well, then, don't take the dollars; or take them, and give them, as some of our Western men do, to some object of public good — if you're rich enough."

"Rich enough! I'm a beggar," broke in Layton, bitterly. "I'm at this instant indebted to you for more than, perhaps, years of labour may enable me to repay."

"I put it all down in a book, Sir," said Quackinboss, sternly, "and I threw it in the fire the first night you read out Homer to me. I said to myself, 'You are well paid, Shaver, old fellow. You never knew how your heart could be shaken that way, and whät brave feelings were lying there still, inside of it.'"

"Nay, dear friend, it is not thus I'm to acquit my debt. Even the moneyed one —"

"I tell you what, Layton," said Quackinboss, rising and striking the table with his clenched fist, "there's only one earthly way to part us, and that is by speaking to me of this. Once, and for ever, I say to you, there's more benefit to a man like *me* to be your companion for a week, than for *you* to have toiled, and fevered, and sweated after gold, as I have done, for thirty hard years."

"Give me a day or two to think over it," said Layton, "and I'll tell you my resolve."

"With all my heart! Only, I would ask you not to take my showing of its goodness, but to reason the thing well out of your own clear head. Many a just cause is lost by a bad lawyer, remember that." And thus the discussion ended for the time.

The following morning, when they met at breakfast, Layton took the other's hand, and said:

"I've thought all night of what you've said, and I accept — not without many a misgiving as regards myself, but I accept."

"I'd not take ten thousand dollars for the engagement, Sir," said Quackinboss, as he wrung Layton's hand. "No, Sir, I'd not take it, for even four cities of the Union."

Although thus the project was ratified between them, scarcely a day passed that Layton did not experience some compunction for his pledge. Now, it was a repugnance to the sort of enterprise he was about to engage in, the criticisms to which he was to expose himself, and the publicity he was to confront; nor could all his companion's sanguine assurances of success com-

pensate him for his own heartfelt repugnance to try the ordeal.

"After all," thought he, "failure, with all its pangs of wounded self-love, will only serve to show Quackinboss how deeply I feel myself his debtor when I am content to risk so much to repay him."

Such was the bond he had signed, such his struggles to fulfil its obligations. One only condition he stipulated for — he wished to go to Ireland before setting out for the States, to see the last resting-place of his poor mother ere he quitted his country, perhaps for ever. Doctor Millar, too, had mentioned that a number of letters were amongst the few relics she had left, and he desired, for many reasons, that these should not fall into strangers' hands. As for Quackinboss, he agreed to everything. Indeed, he thought, that as there was no use in reaching the States before "the Fall," they could not do better than ramble about Ireland, while making some sort of preparation for the coming campaign.

"How sad this place makes me!" said Layton, as they strolled along one of the leaf-strewn alleys. "I wish I had not come here."

"That's just what I was a thinkin' myself," said the other. "I remember coming back all alone once over the Michigan prairie, which I had travelled about eight months before with a set of hearty companions, and whenever I'd come up to one of the spots where our tent used to be pitched, and could mark the place by the circle of greener grass, with a burnt-up patch where the fire stood, it was all I could do not to burst out a cryin' like a child! It's a main cruel thing to go back alone to where you've once been happy in, and there's no forgettin' the misery of it ever after."

"That's true," said Layton; "the pleasant memories are erased for ever. Let us go."

CHAPTER XXV.

Behind the Scenes.

It is amongst the prerogatives of an author to inform his reader of many things which go on "behind the scenes" of life. Let me therefore ask your company, for a brief space, in a small and not ill-furnished chamber, which, deep in the recesses of back scenes, dressing-rooms, scaffolding, and machinery, is significantly entitled, by a painted inscription, "Manager's Room." Though the theatre is a London one, the house is small. It is one of those West-end speculations which are occasionally graced by a company of French comedians, a monologist, or a conjuror. There is all the usual splendour before the curtain, and all the customary squalor behind. At the present moment — for it is growing duskish of a November day, and rehearsal is just over — the general aspect of the place is dreary enough. The box fronts and the lustre are cased in brown holland, and, though the curtain is up, the stage presents nothing but a chaotic mass of disjointed scenery and properties. Tables, chairs, musical instruments, the half of a boat, a throne, and a guillotine, lie littered about, amidst which a ragged supernumerary wanders, broom in hand, but apparently hopeless of where or how to begin to reduce the confusion to order.

The manager's room is somewhat more habitable, for there is a good carpet, warm curtains, and an excellent fire, at which two gentlemen are seated, whose

jocund tones and pleasant faces are certainly, so far as outward signs go, fair guarantees that the world is not dealing very hardly with them, nor they themselves much disgusted with the same world. One of these — the elder, a middle-aged man somewhat inclined to corpulency, with a florid cheek, and clear, dark eye — is the celebrated Mr. Hyman Stocmar; celebrated, I say, for who can take up the morning papers without reading his name and knowing his whereabouts? As thus: "We are happy to be able to inform our readers that Mr. Stocmar is perfectly satisfied with his after season at the 'Regent's.' Whatever other managers may say, Mr. Stocmar can make no complaint of courtly indifference. Her Majesty has four times within the last month graced his theatre with her presence. Mr. Stocmar is at Madrid, at Vienna, at Naples. Mr. Stocmar is in treaty with Signor Urlaccio of Turin, or Mademoiselle Voltarina of Venice. He has engaged the Lapland voyagers, sledge-dogs and all, the Choctaw chiefs, or the Californian lecturer, Boreham, for the coming winter. Let none complain of London in November so long as Mr. Hyman Stocmar caters for the public taste;" and so on. To look at Stocmar's bright complexion, his ruddy glow, his well-filled waistcoat, and his glossy ringlets — for, though verging on forty, he has them still "curly" — you'd scarcely imagine it possible that his life was passed amongst more toil, confusion, difficulty, and distraction, than would suffice to kill five out of any twenty, and render the other fifteen deranged. I do not mean alone the worries inseparable from a theatrical direction — the fights, the squabbles, the insufferable pretensions he must bear, the rivalries he must reconcile, the hates he must con-

ciliate, — that terrible existence of coax and bully, bully and coax, fawn, flatter, trample on, and outrage, which goes on night and day behind the curtain — but that his whole life in the world is exactly a mild counterpart of the same terrible performance; the great people, his patrons, being fifty times more difficult to deal with than the whole corps itself — the dictating Dowagers and exacting Lords, the great man who insists upon Mademoiselle So-and-So being engaged, the great lady who will have no other box than that occupied by the Russian embassy, the friends of this tenor and the partisans of that, the classic admirers of grand music, and that larger section who will have nothing but comic opera, not to mention the very extreme parties who only care for the ballet, and those who vote the “Traviata” an unclean thing. What are a lover’s perjuries to the lies such a man tells all day long? — lies only to be reckoned by that machine that records the revolutions of a screw in a steamer. His whole existence is passed in promises, excuses, evasions, and explanations; always paying a small dividend to truth, he barely escapes utter bankruptcy, and by a plausibility most difficult to distrust, he obtains a kind of half credit — that of one who would keep his word if he could.

By some strange love of compensation, this man, who sees a very dark side of human nature — sees it in its low intrigues, unworthy pursuits, falsehoods, and depravities — who sees even the “great” in their moods of meanness — this man, I say, has the very keenest relish for life, and especially the life of London. He knows every capital of Europe: Paris, from the Chaussée d’Antin to the Boulevard Mont-Parnasse;

Vienna, from the Hof to the Volksgarten; Rome, from the Piazza di Spagna to the Ghetto; and yet he would tell you they are nothing, all of them, to that area between Pall-Mall and the upper gate of Hyde Park. He loves his clubs, his dinners, his junketings to Richmond or Greenwich, his short Sunday excursions to the country, generally to some great artiste's villa near Fulham or Chiswick, and declares to you that it is England alone offers all these in perfection. Is it any explanation? does it give any clue to this gentleman's nature, if I say that a certain aquiline character in his nose, and a peculiar dull lustre in the eye, recal that race who, with all the odds of a great majority against them, enjoy a marvellous share of this world's prosperity? Opposite to him sits one not unworthy — even from externals — of his companionship. He is a very good-looking fellow, with light brown hair, his beard and moustaches being matchless in tint and arrangement; he has got large, full blue eyes, a wide, capacious forehead, and that style of head, both in shape and the way in which it is set on, which indicate a frank, open, and courageous nature. Were it not for a little over-attention to dress, there is no "snobbery" about him, but there is a little too much velvet on his paletot, and his watch trinkets are somewhat in excess, not to say that the gold head of his cane is ostentatiously large and striking. This is Captain Ludlow Paten, a man about town, known to and by everybody, very much asked about in men's circles, but never by any accident met in ladies' society. By very young men he is eagerly sought after. It is one of the best things coming of age has in its gift is to know Paten and be able to ask him to dine. Older ones relish him

full as much; but his great popularity is with a generation beyond that again: the mediævals, who walk massively and ride not at all; the florid, full cheeked, slightly bald generation, who grace club windows of a morning and the coulisses at night. These are his "set" *par excellence*, and he knows them thoroughly. As for himself, or his family, no one knows, or indeed wants to know, anything. The men he associates with chiefly in life are all "cognate numbers," and these are the very people who never trouble their heads about a chance intruder amongst them; and, although some rumour ran that his father was a porter at the Home-office, or a tailor at Blackwall, none care a jot on the matter: they want him; and he couldn't be a whit more useful if his veins ran with all the blood of all the Howards.

There is a story of him, however, which, though I reveal to you, is not generally known. He was once tried for a murder. It was a case of poisoning in Jersey, where the victim was a well-known man on the Turf, and who was murdered by the party he had invited to spend a Christmas with him. Paten was one of the company, and included in the accusation. Two were hanged; Paten and another, named Collier, acquitted. Paten's name was Hunt, but he changed it at once, and, going abroad, entered the Austrian service, where, in eight years, he became a lieutenant. This was enough for probation and rank, and so he returned to England as Captain Ludlow Paten. Stocmar, of course, knew the story; there were half a dozen more, also, who did, but they each and all knew that poor Paul was innocent — that there wasn't a fragment of evidence against him — that he lost — actually lost — by

Hawke's death; that he was carried tipsy to bed that night two hours before the murder; that he was so overcome the next morning by his debauch that he was with difficulty awakened; that the coroner thought him a downright fool, he was so stunned by the event; in a word, though he changed his name to Paten, and now wore a tremendous beard, and affected a slightly foreign accent, these were disguises offered up to the mean prejudices of the world rather than precautions of common safety and security.

Though thus Paten's friends had passed this bill of indemnity in his favour, the affair of Jersey was never alluded to, by even his most intimate amongst them. It was a page of history to be carefully wafered up till that reckoning when all volumes are ransacked, and no blottings nor erasures avail! As for himself, who, to look at him, with his bright countenance, to hear the jocund ring of his merry laugh — who could ever imagine such a figure in a terrible scene of tragedy? What could such a man have to do with any of the dark machinations of crime, the death-struggle, the sack, the silent party that stole across the grass at midnight, and the fish-pond? Oh no! rather picture him as one who, meeting such details in his daily paper, would hastily turn the sheet to seek for pleasanter matter; and so it was he eschewed these themes in conversation, and even when some celebrated trial would for the moment absorb all interest, giving but one topic in almost every circle, Paten would drop such common-places on the subject as showed he cared little or nothing for the event.

Let us now hear what these two men are talking about, as they sat thus confidentially over the fire.

Stocmar is the chief speaker. He does not smoke of a morning, because many of his grand acquaintances are averse to tobacco; as for Paten, the cigar never leaves his lips.

"Well, now for his story!" cried Paten. "I'm anxious to hear about him."

"I'm sorry I can't gratify the curiosity. All I can tell you is where I found him. It was in Dublin. They had a sort of humble Cremorne there — a place little resorted to by the better classes; indeed, rarely visited save by young subs from the garrison, milliners, and such other lost sheep; not very wonderful, after all, seeing that the rain usually contrived to extinguish the fireworks. Having a spare evening on my hands, I went there, and, to my astonishment, witnessed some of the most extraordinary displays in fireworks I had ever seen. Whether for beauty of design, colour and precision, I might declare them unequalled. 'Who's your pyrotechnist?' said I to Barry, the proprietor.

"'I can't spare him, Mr. Stocmar,' said he, 'so I entreat you don't carry him off from me.'

"'Oh!' cried I, 'it was mere curiosity prompted the question. The man is well enough here, but he wouldn't do for us. We have got Giomelli, and Clari ——'

"'Not fit to light a squib for him,' said he, warming up in his enthusiasm for his man. 'I tell you, Sir, that fellow would teach Giomelli, and every Italian of them all. He's a great man, Sir — a genius. He was, once on a time, the great Professor of a University; one of the first scientific men of the kingdom; and if it wasn't for' — here he made a sign of drinking — 'he'd perhaps be this day sought by the best in the land.'

“Though interested by all this, I only gave a sort of incredulous laugh in return, when he went on:

“‘If I was quite sure you’d not take him away — if you’d give me your word of honour for it — I’d just show him to you, and you’d see — even tipsy as he’s sure to be — if I’m exaggerating.’”

“‘What is he worth to you, Barry?’ said I.

“‘He’s worth — not to reckon private engagements for fireworks in gentlemen’s grounds, and the like — he’s worth from seven to eight pounds a week.’”

“‘And you give him?’”

“‘Well, I don’t give him much. It wouldn’t do to give him much; he has no self-control — no restraint. He’d kill himself — actually kill himself.’”

“‘So that you only give him?’”

“‘Fourteen shillings a week. Not but that I am making a little fund for him, and occasionally remitted his wife — he had a wife — a pound or so, without his knowledge.’”

“‘Well, he’s not too dear at that,’ said I. ‘Now let me see and speak with him, Barry, and if I like him, you shall have a fifty-pound note for him. You know well enough that I needn’t pay a sixpence. I have fellows in my employment would track him out if you were to hide him in one of his rocket-canisters; so just be reasonable, and take a good offer.’”

“He was not very willing at first, but he yielded after a while, and so I became the owner of the Professor, for such they called him.”

“Had he no other name?”

“Yes; an old parrot, that he had as a pet, called him Tom, and so we accepted that name; and as Tom, or Professor Tom, he is now known amongst us.”

"Did you find, after all, that you made a good bargain?"

"I never concluded a better, though it has its difficulties; for as the Professor is almost an idiot when perfectly sober, and totally insensible when downright drunk, there is just a short twilight interval between the two, when his faculties are in good order."

"What can he do at this favourable juncture?"

"What can he not? is the question. Why, it was he arranged all the scores for the orchestra after the fire, when we had not a scrap left of the music of the 'Maid of Cashmere.' It was he invented that sunrise, in the last scene of all, with the clouds rolling down the mountains, and all the rivulets glittering as the first rays touch them. It was he wrote the third act of Linton's new comedy — the catastrophe and all were his. It was he dashed off that splendid critique on Ristori, that set the town in a blaze; and then he went home and wrote the parody on 'Myrra' for the Strand, all, the same night, for I had watered the brandy, and kept him in the second stage of delirium till morning."

"What a chance! By Jove! Stocmar, you are the only fellow ever picks up a gem of this water!"

"It's not every man can tell the stone that will pay for the cutting, Paten, remember that. I've had to buy this experience of mine dearly enough."

"Are you not afraid that the others will hear of him, and seduce him by some tempting offer?"

"I have, in a measure, provided against that contingency. He lives here, in a small crib, where we once kept a brown bear; and he never ventures abroad, so that the chances are he will not be discovered."

"How I should like to have a look at him."

"Nothing easier. Let us see, what o'clock is it? Near five. Well, this is not an unfavourable moment; he has just finished his dinner, and not yet begun the evening." Ringing the bell as he spoke, he gave orders to a supernumerary to send the Professor to him.

While they waited for his coming, Stocmar continued to give some further account of his life and habits, the total estrangement from all companionship in which he lived, his dislike to be addressed, and the seeming misanthropy that animated him. At last the manager, getting impatient, rang once more, to ask if he were about to appear.

"Well, Sir," said the man, with a sort of unwillingness in his manner, "he said as much as that he wasn't coming; that he had just dined, and meant to enjoy himself without business for a while."

"Go back and tell him that Mr. Stocmar has something very important to tell him; that five minutes will be enough. — You see the stuff he's made of?" said the manager, as the man left the room.

Another, and nearly as long a delay ensued, and at last the dragging sound of heavy slipshod feet was heard approaching; the door was rudely opened, and a tall old man, of haggard appearance and in the meanest rags, entered, and, drawing himself proudly up, stared steadfastly at Stocmar, without even for an instant noticing the presence of the other.

"I wanted a word, just one word with you, Professor," began the manager, in an easy, familiar tone.

"Men do not whistle even for a dog, when he's at his meals," said the old man, insolently. "They told you I was at my dinner, didn't they?"

"Sorry to disturb you, Tom; but, as two minutes would suffice for all I had to say —"

"Reason the more to keep it for another occasion," was the stubborn reply.

"We are too late this time," whispered Stocmar across towards Paten; "the fellow has been at the whisky-bottle already."

With that marvellous acuteness of hearing that a brain in its initial stage of excitement is occasionally gifted with, the old man caught the words, and, as suddenly rendered aware of the presence of a third party, turned his eyes on Paten. At first the look was a mere stare, but gradually the expression grew more fixed, and the bleared eyes dilated, while his whole features became intensely eager. With a shuffling but hurried step he then moved across the floor, and coming close up to where Paten stood, he laid his hands upon his shoulders, and wheeled him rudely round, till the light of the window fell full upon him.

"Well, old gent," said Paten, laughing, "if we are not old friends, you treat me very much as though we were."

A strange convulsion, half smile, half grin, passed over the old man's face, but he never uttered a word, but stood gazing steadily on the other.

"You are forgetting yourself, Tom," said Stocmar, angrily. "That gentleman is not an acquaintance of yours."

"And who told *you* that?" said the old man, insolently. "Ask himself if we are not."

"I'm afraid I must give it against you, old boy," said Paten, good humouredly. "This is the first time I have had the honour to meet you."

"It is not," said the old man, with a solemn and even haughty emphasis.

"I could scarcely have forgotten a man of such impressive manners," said Paten. "Will you kindly remind me of where and how you imagine us to have met?"

"I will," said the other, sternly. "You shall hear the where and the how. The where was in the High Court, at Jersey, on the eighteenth of January, in the year 18—; the how, was my being called on to prove the death, by corrosive sublimate, of Godfrey Hawke. Now, Sir, what say you to my memory — is it accurate, or not?"

Had not Paten caught hold of a heavy chair, he would have fallen; even as it was, he swayed forward and backward like a drunken man.

"And you — you were a doctor in those days, it seems," said he, with an affected laugh, that made his ghastly features appear almost horrible.

"Yes; they accused *me* of curing folk, just as they charged *you* with killing them. Calumnious world that it is — lets no man escape!"

"After all, my worthy friend," said Paten, as he drew himself haughtily up, and assumed, though by a great effort, his wonted ease of manner, "you are deceived by some chance resemblance, for I know nothing about Jersey, and just as little of that interesting little incident you have alluded to."

"This is even more than you attempted on the trial. You never dreamed of so bold a stroke as that, there. No, no, Paul Hunt, I know you well: that's a gift of mine — drunk or sober it has stuck to me through life — I never forget a face — never!"

"Come, come, old Tom," said Stocmar, as he drew forth a sherry decanter and a large glass from a small recess in the wall, "this is not the kindest way to welcome an old friend or make a new one. Taste this sherry, and take the bottle back with you, if you like the flavour." Stocmar's keen glance met Paten's eyes, and as quickly the other understood his tactic.

"Good wine, rare wine, if it wasn't so cold on the stomach," said the old man, as he tossed off the second goblet. Already his eyes grew wild and bloodshot, and his watery lip trembled. "To your good health, gentlemen both," said he, as he finished the decanter. "I'm proud you liked that last scene. It will be finer before I've done with it; for I intend to make the lava course down the mountain, and be seen fitfully as the red glow of the eruption lights up the picture."

"With the bay and the fleet all seen in the distance, Tom," broke in Stocmar.

"Just so, Sir; the lurid glare — as the newspaper fellows will call it — over all. Nothing like Bengal-lights and Roman-candles; they are the poetry of the modern drama. Ah! Sir, no sentiment without nitrate of potash; no poetry if you haven't phosphorus." And with a drunken laugh, and a leer of utter vacancy, the old man reeled from the room and sought his den again.

"Good Heavens, Stocmar! what a misfortune!" cried Paten, as, sick with terror, he dropped down into a chair.

"Never fret about it, Paul. That fellow will know nothing of what has passed when he wakes to-morrow. His next drunken bout — and I'll take care it shall be a deep one — will let such a flood of Lethe over his

brain, that not one single recollection will survive the deluge. You saw why I produced the decanter?"

"Yes; it was cleverly done, and it worked like magic. But only think, Stocmar, if any one had chanced to be here — it was pure chance that there was not — and then —"

"Egad! it might have been as you say," said Stocmar; "there would have been no stopping the old fellow; and had he but got the very slightest encouragement, had been off at score."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A Dark Remembrance.

ON a sea like glass, and with a faint moonlight streaking the calm water, the *Vivid*, her Majesty's mail packet, steamed away for Ostend. There were very few passengers aboard, so that it was clearly from choice two tall men, wrapped well up in comfortable travelling-cloaks, continued to walk the deck, till the sandy headlands of Belgium could be dimly descried through the pinkish grey of the morning. They smoked and conversed as they paced up and down, talking in low, cautious tones, and even entirely ceasing to speak when by any chance a passing sailor came within earshot.

"It is, almost day for day, nine years since I crossed over here," said one, "and certainly a bleaker future never lay before any man than on that morning!"

"Was *she* with you, Ludlow?" asked the other, whose deep voice recalled the great Mr. Stocmar. "Was *she* with you?"

"No; she refused to come. There was nothing I didn't do, or threaten to do; but in vain. I menaced her with every sort of publicity and exposure. I swore I'd write the whole story — giving a likeness of her from the miniature in my possession. That I'd give her letters to the world in fac-simile of her own hand; and that, while the town rang with the tragedy, as the newspapers called it, they should have a dash of melodrama or high comedy too, to heighten the interest. All in vain; she braved everything — defied everything."

"There are women with that sort of masculine temperament —"

"Masculine, you call it!" cried the other, scoffingly; "you never made such a blunder in your life. They are entirely and essentially womanly. You'd break twenty men down, smash them like rotten twigs, before you'd succeed in turning one woman of this stamp from her fixed will. I'll tell you another thing, too, Stocmar," added he, in a lower voice: "they do not fear the world the way men do. Would you believe it? Collins and myself left the island in a fishing-boat, and she — the woman — went coolly on board the mail packet with her maid and child, and sat down to breakfast with the passengers, one of whom had actually served on the jury."

"What pluck! I call that pluck."

"It's more like madness than real courage," said the other, peevishly; and for some minutes they walked on side by side without a word.

"If I remember rightly," said Stocmar, "she was not put on her trial?"

"No; there was a great discussion about it, and

many blamed the Crown lawyers for not including her; but, in truth, there was not a shadow of evidence to be brought against her. His treatment of her might have suggested the possibility of any vengeance."

"Was it so cruel?"

"Cruel is no word for it. There was not an insult, nor an outrage, spared her. She passed one night in the deep snow in the garden, and was carried senseless into the house at morning, and only rallied after days of treatment. He fired at her another time."

"Shot her!"

"Yes, shot her through the shoulder — sent the bullet through here — because she would not write to Ogden a begging letter, entreating him to assist her with a couple of hundred pounds."

"Oh, that was too gross!" exclaimed Stocmar.

"He told her, 'You've cost me fifteen hundred in damages, and you may tell Ogden he shall have you back again for fifty.'"

"And she bore all this?"

"I don't know what you mean by bearing it. She did not stab him. Some say that Hawke was mad, but I never thought so. He had boastful fits at times, in which he would vaunt all his villanies, and tell you of the infamies he had done with this man and that; but they were purely the emanations of an intense vanity, which left him unable to conceal anything. Imagine, for instance, his boasting how he had done the 'Globe' office out of ten thousand, insured on his first wife's life — drowned when bathing. I heard the story from his own lips, and I'll never forget his laugh as he said, 'I'd have been in a hole if Mary hadn't.'"

"That was madness, depend on't."

"No; I think not. It was partly vanity, for he delighted above all things to create an effect, and partly a studied plan to exercise an influence by actual terror, in which he had a considerable success. I could tell you of a score of men who would not have dared to thwart him; and it was at last downright desperation drove Tom Towers and Wake to" — he hesitated, faltered, and, in a weak voice, added — "to do it!"

"How was it brought about?" whispered Stocmar, cautiously.

Paten took out his cigar-case, selected a cigar with much care, lighted it, and, after smoking for some seconds, began: "It all happened this way: we met one night at that singing-place in the Haymarket. Towers, Wake, Collins, and myself were eating an oyster supper, when Hawke came in. He had been dining at the Rag, and had won largely at whist from some young cavalry swells, who had just joined. He was flushed and excited, but not from drinking, for he said he had not tasted anything but claret-cup at dinner. 'You're a mangy-looking lot,' said he, 'with your stewed oysters and stout,' as he came up. 'Why, frozen-out gardeners are fine gentlemen in comparison. Are there no robberies going on at the Ottoman — nothing doing down at Grimshaw's?'

"'You're very bumptious about belonging to the Rag, Hawke,' said Towers; 'but they'll serve you the same trick they did *me* one of these days.'

"'No, Sir, they'll never turn *me* out,' said Hawke, insolently.

"'More fools they, then,' said the other; 'for you can do *ten* things for *one* that I can; and what's more, you *have* done them.'

“‘And will again, old boy, if that’s any comfort to you,’ cried Hawke, finishing off the other’s malt. ‘Waiter, fetch me some cold oysters, and score them to these gentlemen,’ said he, gaily, taking his place amongst us. And so we chaffed away, about one thing or another, each one contributing some lucky or unlucky hit that had befallen him; but Hawke always bringing up how he had succeeded here, and what he had won there, and only vexed if any one reminded him that he had been ever ‘let in’ in his life.

“‘Look here,’ cried he, at last; ‘ye’re an uncommon seedy lot, very much out at elbows, and so I’ll do you a generous turn. I’ll take ye all over to my cottage at Jersey for a week, house and grub you, and then turn you loose on the island, to do your wicked will with it.’

“‘We take your offer — we say, Done!’” cried Collins.

“‘I should think you do! You’ve been sleeping under the colonnade of the Haymarket these last three nights,’ said he to Collins, ‘for want of a lodging. There’s Towers chuckling over the thought of having false keys to all my locks; and Master Paul, yonder,’ said he, ‘grinning at me, is in love with my wife. Don’t deny it, man; I broke open her writing-desk t’other day, and read all your letters to her: but I’m a generous dog; and what’s better,’ added he, with an insolent laugh, ‘one as bites, too — eh, Paul! don’t forget that.’

“‘Do you mean the invitation to be real and bonâ fide?’ growled out Towers; ‘for I’m in no jesting humour.’

“‘I do,’ said Hawke, flourishing out a handful of bank-notes; ‘there’s enough here to feed five times as

many blacklegs; and more costly guests a man can't have.'

"'You'll go, won't you?' said Collins to me, as we walked home together afterwards.

"'Well,' said I, doubtfully, 'I don't exactly see my way.'

"'By Jove!' cried he, 'you *are* afraid of him.'

"'Not a bit,' said I, impatiently. 'I'm well acquainted with his boastful habit; he's not so dangerous as he'd have us to believe.'

"'But will you go? — that's the question,' said he, more eagerly.

"'Why are you so anxious to know?' asked I, again.

"'I'll be frank with you,' said he, in a low, confidential tone. 'Towers wants to be certain of one thing. Mind, now,' added he, 'I'm sworn to secrecy, and I'm telling you now what I solemnly swore never to reveal; so don't betray me, Paul. Give me your hand on it.' And I gave him my hand.

"'Even after I had given him this pledge he seemed to have become timorous, and for a few minutes he faltered and hesitated, totally unable to proceed. At last he said, half inquiringly:

"'At all events, Paul, *you* cannot like Hawke?'

"'Like him! there is not the man on earth I hate as I hate *him*!'

"'That's exactly what Towers said: "Paul detests him more than we do."'

"The moment Collins said these words the whole thing flashed full upon me. They were plotting to do for Hawke, and wanted to know how far I might be trusted in the scheme.

“‘Look here, Tom,’ said I, confidentially; ‘don’t tell me anything. I don’t want to be charged with other men’s secrets; and, in return, I’ll promise not to pry after them. ““Make your little game,”” as they say at Ascot, and don’t ask whether I’m in the ring or not. Do you understand me?’

“‘I do, perfectly,’ said he. ‘The only point Towers really wanted to be sure of is, what of *her*? What he says is, there’s no telling what a woman will do.’

“‘If I were merely to give an opinion,’ said I, carelessly, ‘I’d say, no danger from that quarter: but, mind, it’s only an opinion.’

“‘Wake says you’d marry her,’ said he, bluntly, and with an abruptness that showed he had at length got courage to say what he wanted.

“‘Tom Collins,’ said I, seriously, ‘let us play fair; don’t question *me*, and I’ll not question *you*.’

“‘But you’ll come along with us?’ asked he, eagerly.

“‘I’m not so sure of that, now,’ said I; ‘but if I do, it’s on one only condition.’

“‘And that is?’

“‘That I’m to know nothing, or hear nothing, of whatever you’re about. I tell you distinctly that I’ll not pry anywhere, but in return, treat me as a stranger on whose discretion you cannot trust.’

“‘You like sure profits and a safe venture, in fact,’ said he, sneeringly.

“‘Say one half of that again, Collins,’ said I, ‘and I’ll cut with the whole lot of you. I ask no share in your gains here.’

“‘But you’ll not peach on us, Paul?’ said he, catching my hand.

“‘Never,’ said I, ‘as long as you are on the square with *me*.’

“After this, he broke out into the wildest abuse of Hawke, making him out — as it was not hard to do — the greatest villain alive, mingling the attack with a variety of details of the vast sums he had latterly been receiving. ‘There are,’ he said, ‘more than two thousand in hard cash in his hands at this moment, and a number of railway shares and some Peruvian bonds, part of his first wife’s fortune, which he has just recovered by a lawsuit.’ So close and accurate were all these details, so circumstantial every part of the story, that I perceived the plan must have been long prepared, and only waiting for a favourable moment for execution. With this talk he occupied the whole way, till I reached my lodgings.

“‘And now, Paul,’ said he, ‘before we part, give me your word of honour once more.’

“‘There’s my pledge,’ said I, ‘and there’s my hand. So long as I hear nothing, and see nothing, I know nothing.’ And we said good night, and separated.

“So long as I was talking with Collins,” continued Paten — “so long, in fact, as I was taking my own side in the discussion — I did not see any difficulty in thus holding myself aloof from the scheme, and not taking any part whatever in the game played out before me; but when I found myself alone in my room, and began to conjure up an inquest and a trial, and all the searching details of a cross-examination, I trembled from head to foot. I remember to this hour how I walked to and fro in my room, putting questions to myself aloud, and in the tone of an examining counsel, till my heart sickened with fear; and when at last I

lay down, wearied but not sleepy, on my bed, it was to swear a solemn vow that nothing on earth should induce me to go over to Jersey.

"The next day I was ill and tired, and I kept my bed, telling my servant to let no one disturb me on any pretext. Towers called, but was not admitted. Collins came twice, and tried hard to see me, but my man was firm, so that Tom was fain to write a few words on a card, in pencil: 'H. is ill at Limmer's; but it is only del. tremens, and he will be all right by Saturday. The boat leaves Blackwall at eleven. Don't fail to be in time.' This was Thursday. There was no time to lose, if I only knew what was best to be done. I'll not weary you with the terrible tale of that day's tortures; how I thought over every expedient in turn, and in turn rejected it; now, I would go to Hawke, and tell him everything; now, to the Secretary of State at the Home-office; now, to Scotland-yard, to inform the police; then I bethought me of trying to dissuade Towers and the others from the project; and at last I resolved to make a 'bolt' of it, and set out for Ireland by the night mail, and lie hid in some secluded spot till all was over. About four o'clock I got up, and throwing on my dressing-gown, I walked to the window. It was a dark, dull day, with a thin rain falling, and few persons about; but just as I was turning away from the window I saw a tall, coarse-looking fellow pass into the oyster-shop opposite, giving a glance up towards me as he went; the next minute a man in a long camlet cloak left the shop, and walked down the street; and, muffled though he was from head to foot, I knew it was Towers.

"I suppose my conscience wasn't all right, for I

sank down into a chair as sick as if I'd been a month in a fever. I saw they had set a watch on me, and I knew well the men I had to deal with. If Towers or Wake so much as suspected me, they'd make all safe before they ventured further. I looked out again, and there was the big man, with a dark blue woollen comforter round his throat, reading the advertisements on a closed shutter, and then strolling negligently along the street. Though his hat was pressed down over his eyes, I saw them watching me as he went; and such was my terror, that I fancied they were still gazing at me after he turned the corner.

"Fully determined now to make my escape, I sat down and wrote a few lines to Collins, saying that a relation of mine, from whom I had some small expectations, was taken suddenly ill, and sent for me to come over and see him, so that I was obliged to start for Ireland by that night's mail. I never once alluded to Jersey, but concluded with a kindly message to all friends, and a hasty good-by.

"Desiring to have my servant out of the way, I despatched him with this note, and then set about making my own preparations for departure. It was now later than I suspected, so that I had barely time to pack some clothes hastily into a carpet-bag, and cautiously descending the stairs with it in my hand, opened the street door and issued forth. Before I had, however, gone ten yards from the door, the large man was at my side, and in a gruff voice offered to carry my bag. I refused as roughly, and walked on towards the cab-stand. I selected a cab, and said Euston-square; and as I did so the big fellow mounted the box and sat down beside the driver. I saw it was no use, and

affecting to have forgotten something at my lodgings, I got out, paid the cab, and returned home. How cowardly! you'd say. No, Stocmar, I knew my men: it was *not* cowardly. I knew that however they might abandon a project, or forego a plan, they would never, never forgive a confederate that tried to betray them. No, no," muttered he, below his breath; "no man shall tell me it was cowardice.

"When I saw that there was no way to draw back, I determined to go forward boldly, and even eagerly, trusting to the course of events to give me a chance of escape. I wrote to Collins to say that my relative was better, and should not require me to go over; and, in short, by eleven o'clock on the appointed Saturday, we all assembled on the deck of the *St. Helier*, bound for Jersey.

"Never was a jollier party met for an excursion of pleasure — all but Hawke himself; he came aboard very ill, and went at once to his berth. He was in that most pitiable state, the commencing convalescence of delirium tremens, when all the terrors of a deranged mind still continue to disturb and distress the recovering intellect. As we went down one by one to see him, he would scarcely speak, or even notice us. At times, too, he seemed to have forgotten the circumstance which brought us all there, and he would mutter to himself, 'It was no good job gathered all these fellows together. Where can they be going to? What can they be after?' We had just sat down to dinner, when Towers came laughing into the cabin. 'What do you think,' said he to me, 'Hawke has just told me confidentially? He said, "'I'm not at all easy about that lot on deck"' — meaning you all. "'The devil doesn't muster his

men for mere drill and parade, and the moment I land in the island I'll tell the police to have an eye on them."''' We laughed heartily at this polite intention of our host, and joked a good deal over the various imputations our presence might excite. From this we went on to talk over what was to be done if Hawke should continue ill, all being agreed that, having come so far, it would be impossible to forego our projected pleasure, and at last it was decided that I, by virtue of certain domestic relations ascribed to me, should enact the host, and do the honours of the house, and so they filled bumpers to the Regency, and I promised to be a mild Prince.

"'There's the thing for Godfrey,' said Towers, as some grilled chicken was handed round; and taking the dish from the waiter, he carried it himself to Hawke, and remained while he ate it. 'Poor devil!' said he, as he came back, 'he seems quite soft-hearted about my little attentions to him. He actually said, "'Thank you, old fellow.'''"

Perhaps our reader will thank us if we do not follow Paten through a narrative in which the minutest detail was recorded, nor any, even the most trivial, incident forgotten, graven as they were on a mind that was to retain them to the last! All the levities they indulged in during the voyage — which was, in fact, little other than an orgie from the hour they sailed to that they landed, dashed with little gloomy visits to that darkened sick-berth where Hawke lay — all were remembered, all chronicled.

The cottage itself — The Hawke's Nest, as it was whimsically called — he described with all the picturesque ardour of an artist. It was truly a most lovely

spot, nestled down in a cleft between the hills, and so shut in from all wintry influences, that the oranges and myrtles overgrew it as though the soil were Italy. The grounds were of that half-park, half-garden order, which combines green sward and flowering border, and masses into one beauteous whole the glories of the forest tree with the spray-like elegance of the shrub. There was a little lake, too, with an island, over whose leafy copper beeches a little Gothic spire appeared — an imitation of some richly ornamented shrine in Moorish Spain. What was it that in this dark story would still attract him to the scenery of this spot, making him linger and dally in it as though he could not tear himself away? Why would he loiter in description of some shady alley, some woodbine-trellised path, as though the scene had no other memories but those of a blissful bygone? In fact, such was the sort of fascination the locality seemed to exercise over him, that his voice grew softer, the words faltered as he spoke them, and once he drew his hand across his eyes, as though to wipe away a tear.

“Was it not strange, Stocmar,” broke he suddenly in, “I was never able to see her one moment alone? She avoided it in fifty ways! Hawke kept his room for two days after we arrived, and we scarcely ever saw her, and when we did, it was hurriedly and passingly. Godfrey, too, he would send for one of us — always one, mark you, alone; and after a few muttering words about his suffering, he’d be sure to say, ‘Can *you* tell me what has brought them all down here? I can’t get it out of my head that there ain’t mischief brewing.’ Now each of us in turn had heard this speech, and we conned it over and over again. ‘It’s

the woman has put this notion in his head,' said Towers. 'I'll take my oath it came from *her*. Look to *that*, Paul Hunt, said he, to me, 'for you have influence in that quarter.' I retorted angrily to this, and very high words passed between us; in fact, the altercation went so far, that, when we met at dinner, we never addressed, or noticed, each other. I'll never forget that dinner. Wake seemed to range himself on Towers's side, and Collins looked half disposed to take mine; everything that was said by one, was sure to be capped by some sharp impertinence by another, and we sat there interchanging slights and sneers and half-covert insolences for hours.

"If there had been a steamer for Southampton I'd have started next morning. I told Collins so when I went to my room; but he was much opposed to this, and said, 'If we draw back now, it must be with Towers and Wake — all or none!' We passed nearly the entire night in discussing the point, and could not agree on it.

"I suppose that Hawke must have heard how ill we all got on together. There was a little girl — a daughter by his first wife — always in and out of the room where we were; and though in appearance a mere infant, the shrewdest, craftiest little sprite I ever beheld. Now this Clara, I suspect, told Hawke everything that passed. I know for certain that she was in the flower-garden, outside the window, during a very angry altercation between Towers and myself, and when I went up afterwards to see Hawke he knew the whole story.

"What a day that was! I had asked Loo to let me speak a few words with her alone, and, after great

hesitation, she promised to meet me in the garden in the evening. I had determined on telling her everything. I was resolved to break with Towers and Wake, and I trusted to her clear head to advise me how best to do it. The greater part of the morning Towers was up in Hawke's room; he had always an immense influence over Godfrey; he knew things about him none others had ever heard of, and, when he came down stairs, he took the doctor — it was your old Professor, that mad fellow — into the library, and spent full an hour with him. When Towers came out afterwards he seemed to have got over his angry feeling towards me, and coming up in all seeming frankness, took my arm, and led me out into the shrubbery.

“‘Hawke is sinking rapidly,’ said he; ‘the doctor says he cannot possibly recover.’

“‘Indeed!’ said I, amazed. ‘What does he call the malady?’

“‘He says it's a break-up — a general smash — lungs, liver, brain, all destroyed; a common complaint with fellows who have lived hard.’ He looked at me steadily, almost fiercely, as he said this, but I seemed quite insensible to his gaze. ‘He'll not leave *her* a farthing,’ added he, after a moment.

“‘The greater villain he, then,’ said I. ‘It was for *him* she ruined herself.’

“‘Yes, yes, that was all true enough once; but *now*. Master Paul — now, there's another story, you know,’

“‘If you mean under the guise of a confidence to renew the insults you dared to pass upon me yesterday,’ said I, ‘I tell you at once I'll not bear it.’

“‘Can't you distinguish between friendship and indifference?’ said he, warmly. ‘I don't ask you to trust

me with your secrets, but let us talk like men, not like children. Hawke intends to alter his will to-morrow. It had been made in her favour; at least, he left her this place here, and some small thing he has in Wales; he's going to change everything and leave all to the girl.'

"'It can't be a considerable thing after all,' said I, peevishly, and not well knowing what I said.

"'Pardon me,' broke he in; 'he has won far more than any of us suspected. He has in hard cash above two thousand pounds in the house, a mass of acceptances in good paper, and several bonds of first-rate men. I went over his papers this morning with him, and saw his book, too, for the Oaks — a thing, I suppose, he had never shown to any living man before. He has let us all in there, Paul — he has, by Jove! for while telling us to put all upon Jeremy, he's going to win with Proserpine!'

"'I confess, the baseness of this treachery sickened me.

"'How Paul will storm, and rave, and curse me, when he finds it out,'" said he; "'but there was no love lost between us.'" He never liked you, Hunt — never.'

"'It's not too late yet,' said I, 'to hedge about and save ourselves.'

"'No, there's time still, especially if *he* "hops the twig." Now,' said he, after a long pause, 'if by any chance he were to die to-night, *she'd* be safe — *she'd* at least inherit some hundreds a year, and a good deal of personal property.'

"'There's no chance of *that*, though,' said I, negligently.

"'Who told you so, Paul?' said he, with a cunning cast of his eye. 'That old drunken doctor said he'd

not insure him for twenty-four hours. A rum old beast he is! Do you know what he said to me a while ago? "Captain," said he, "do you know anything about chemistry?" "Nothing whatever," said I. "Well," said he, with a hiccup — for he was far gone in liquor — "albumen is the antidote to the muriate; and if you want to give him a longer line, let him have an egg to eat." "

"Good Heavens! Do you mean that he suspected—"

"He was dead drunk two minutes afterwards, and said that Hawke was dying of typhus, and that he'd certify it under his hand. 'But no matter about *him*,' said he, impatiently. 'If Hawke goes off to-night, it will be a good thing for all of us. Here's this imp of a child!' muttered he, below his breath; 'let us be careful.' And so we parted company, each taking his own road.

"I walked about the grounds alone all day — I need not tell you with what a heavy heart and a loaded conscience — and only came back to dinner. We were just sitting down to table, when the door opened, and, like a corpse out of his grave, Hawke stole slowly in, and sat down amongst us. He never spoke a word, nor looked at any one. I swear to you, so terrible was the apparition, so ghastly, and so death-like, that I almost doubted if he were still living.

"'Well done, old boy! there's nothing will do you such good as a little cheering up,' cried Towers.

"'She's asleep,' said he, in a low, feeble voice, 'and so I stole down to eat my last dinner with you.'

"'Not the last for many a year to come,' said Wake, filling his glass. 'The doctor says you are made of iron.'

"‘A man of mettle, I suppose,’ said he, with a feeble attempt to laugh.

"‘There! isn’t he quite himself again?’ cried Wake. ‘By George! he’ll see us all down yet!’

"‘Down, where?’ said Hawke, solemnly. And the tone and the words struck a chill over us.

"We did not rally for some time, and when we did, it was with an effort forced and unnatural. Hawke took something on his plate, but eat none of it, turning the meat over with his fork in a listless way. His wine, too, he laid down when half way to his lips, and then spat it out over the carpet, saying to himself something inaudible.

"‘What’s the matter, Godfrey? Don’t you like that capital sherry?’ said Towers.

"‘No,’ said he, in a hollow, sepulchral voice.

"‘We have all pronounced it admirable,’ went on the other.

"‘It burns — everything burns,’ said the sick man.

"I filled him a glass of iced water and handed it to him, and Towers gave me a look so full of hate and vengeance, that my hand nearly let the tumbler drop.

"‘Don’t drink cold water, man!’ cried Towers, catching his arm; ‘that is the worst thing in the world for you.’

"‘It won’t poison me, will it?’ said Hawke. And he fixed his leaden, glazy gaze on Towers.

"‘What the devil do you mean?’ cried he, savagely. ‘This is an ugly jest, Sir.’

"The sick man, evidently more startled by the violence of the manner than by the words themselves, looked from one to the other of us all round the table.

“‘Forgive me, old fellow,’ burst in Towers, with an attempt to laugh; ‘but the whole of this day, I can’t say why or how, but everything irritates and chafes me. I really believe that we all eat and drink too well here. We live like fighting-cocks, and, of course, are always ready for conflict.’

“We all did our best to forget the unpleasant interruption of a few minutes back, and talked away with a sort of over-eagerness. But Hawke never spoke; there he sat, turning his glazed, filmy look from one to the other, as though in vain trying to catch up something of what went forward. He looked so ill — so fearfully ill, all the while, that it seemed a shame to sit carousing there around him, and so I whispered to Collins, but Towers overheard me, and said,

“‘All wrong. *You* don’t know what tough material he is made of. This is the very thing to rally him — eh, Godfrey?’ cried he, louder. ‘I’m telling these fellows that you’ll be all the better for coming down amongst us, and that when I have made you a brew of that milk-punch you are so fond of —’

“‘It won’t burn my throat, will it?’ whined out the sick man.

“‘Burn your throat! not a bit of it; but warm your blood up, give energy to your heart, and brace your nerves, so that before the bowl is finished you’ll sing us “‘Tom Hall;”’ or, better still, “‘That rainy day I met her”’ —

That rainy day I met her,
When she tripped along the street,
And with petticoat half lifted,
Showed a dainty pair of feet.

How does it go?’ said he, trying to catch the tune.

"A ghastly grin — an expression more horrible than I ever saw on a human face before — was Hawke's recognition of this appeal to him, and beating his fingers feebly on the table, he seemed trying to recal the air.

"‘I can't stand this any longer,’ whispered Wake to me; ‘the man is dying!’

"‘Confound you for a fool!’ said Towers, angrily. ‘You'll see what a change an hour will make in him. I've got the receipt for that milk-punch up in my room. I'll go and fetch it.’ And with this he arose, and hastily left the room.

"‘Where's Tom?’ said the sick man, with a look of painful eagerness. ‘Where is he?’

"‘He's gone for the receipt of the milk-punch; he's going to make a brew for you!’ said I.

"‘But I won't take it. I'll taste nothing more,’ said he, with a marked emphasis. ‘I'll take nothing but what Loo gives me,’ muttered he, below his breath. And we all exchanged significant looks with each other.

"‘This will never do,’ murmured Wake, in a low voice. ‘Say something — tell a story — but let us keep moving.’

"And Collins began some narrative of his early experiences on the Turf. The story, like all such, was the old burden of knave and dupe — the man who trusted and the man who cheated. None of us paid much attention to the details, but drank away at our wine, and sent the decanters briskly round, when suddenly, at the mention of a horse being found dead in his stall on the morning he was to have run, Hawke broke in with ‘Nobbled! Just like me!’

"Though the words were uttered in a sort of re-

verie, and with a bent-down head, we all were struck dumb, and gazed ruefully at each other. 'Where's Towers all this time?' said Collins to me, in a whisper. I looked at my watch, and saw that it was forty-four minutes since he left the room. I almost started up from my seat with terror, as I thought what this long absence might portend. Had he actually gone off, leaving us all to the perils that were surrounding us? Was it that he had gone to betray us to the law? I could not speak from fear when the door opened, and he came in and sat down in his place. Though endeavouring to seem easy and unconcerned, I could mark that he wore an air of triumph and success that he could not subdue.

"'Here comes the brew,' said he, as the servant brought in a large smoking bowl of fragrant mixture.

"'I'll not touch it!' said Hawke, with a resolute tone that startled us.

"'What! after giving me more than half an hour's trouble in preparing it,' said Towers. Come, old fellow, that is not gracious.'

"'Drink it yourselves!' said Hawke, sulkily.

"'So we will, after we have finished this Burgundy,' said Towers. 'But, meanwhile, what will *you* have. It's poor fun to sit here with an empty glass.' And he filled him out a goblet of the milk-punch and placed it before him. 'Here's to the yellow jacket with black sleeves,' said he, lifting his glass; 'and may we see him the first "round the corner." "'

"'First "round the corner!" "' chorused the rest of us. And Hawke, catching up the spirit of the toast, seized his glass and drank it off.

“‘I knew he’d drink his own colours if he had one leg in the grave!’ said Towers.

“The clock on the mantelpiece struck ten at this moment. It was the hour I was to meet her in the shrubbery; and so, pretending to go in search of my cigar-case, I slipped away and left them. As I was passing behind Hawke’s chair, he made a gesture to me to come near him. I bent down my head to him, and he said, ‘It won’t do this time; she’ll not meet you, Paul.’ These were the last words I ever heard him speak.”

When Paten had got thus far, he walked away from his friend, and, leaning his arm on the bulwark, seemed overwhelmed with the dreary retrospect. He remained thus for a considerable time, and only rallied as Stocmar, drawing his arm within his, said, “Come, come, this is no fresh sorrow now. Let me hear the remainder.”

“He spoke truly,” said he, in a broken voice. “She never came! I walked the grounds for above an hour and a half, and then I came back towards the cottage. There was a light in her room, and I whistled to attract her notice, and threw some gravel against the glass but she only closed the shutters, and did not mind me. I cannot tell you how my mind was racked between the actual terror of the situation and the vague dread of some unknown evil. What had produced this change in *her*? Why had *she* broken with me? Could it be that Towers had seen her in that long interval he was absent from the table, and, if so, to what intent? She always hated and dreaded him; but who could tell what influence such a man might acquire in a moment of terrible interest? A horrible sense of jealousy —

not the less maddening that it was shadowy and uncertain — now filled my mind; and — would you believe it? — I thought worse of Towers for his conduct towards me than for the dreadful plot against Hawke. Chance led me, as I walked, to the bank of the little lake, where I stood for some time thinking. Suddenly a splash — too heavy for the spring of a fish — startled me, and immediately after I heard the sound of some one forcing his way through the close underwood beside me. Before I had well rallied from my astonishment, a voice I well knew to be that of Towers cried out,

“‘Who’s there? — who are you?’

“I called out, ‘Hunt — Paul Hunt!’

“‘And what the devil brings you here, may I ask?’ said he, insolently, but in a tone that showed he had been drinking deeply.

“It was no time to provoke discord; it was a moment that demanded all we could muster of concession and agreement, and so I simply told how mere accident had turned my steps in this direction.

“‘What if I said I don’t believe you, Paul Hunt?’ retorted he, savagely. ‘What if I said that I see your whole game in this business, and know every turn and every trick you mean to play us?’

“‘If you had not drunk so much of Godfrey’s Burgundy,’ said I, ‘you’d never have spoken this way to an old friend.’

“‘Friend be —!’ cried he, savagely. ‘I know no friends but the men who will share danger with you as well as drink out of the same bottle. Why did you leave us this evening?’

“‘I’ll be frank with you, Tom,’ said I. ‘I had made a rendezvous with Louisa; ‘but she never came.’

“‘Why should she?’ muttered he, angrily. ‘Why should she trust the man who is false to his pals?’

“‘That I have never been,’ broke I in. ‘Ask Hawke himself. Ask Godfrey, and he’ll tell you whether I have ever dropped a word against you.’

“‘No he wouldn’t,’ said he, doggedly.

“‘I tell you he would,’ cried I. ‘Let us go to him this minute.’

“‘I’d rather not, if the choice were given me,’ said he, with a horrid laugh.

“‘Do you mean,’ cried I, in terror — ‘do you mean that it is all over?’

“‘All over!’ said he, gravely, and as though his clouded faculties were suddenly cleared. ‘Godfrey knows all about it, by this time,’ muttered he, half to himself.

“‘Would to Heaven we had never come here!’ burst I in, for my heart was breaking with anguish and remorse. ‘How did it happen, and where?’

“‘In the chair where you last saw him. We thought he had fallen asleep, and were for having him carried up to bed, when he gave a slight shudder and woke up again. “‘Where’s Loo?’” cried he, in a weak voice; and then, before we could answer, he added, “‘Where’s Hunt?’”

“‘Paul was here a moment ago; he’ll be back immediately.’

“‘He gave a laugh — such a laugh I hope never to hear again. Cold as he lies there now, that terrible grin is on his face yet. “‘You’ve done it this time, Tom,’” said he to me, in a whisper. “‘What do you mean?’” said I. “‘Death!’” said he; “‘it’s all up with

me — your time is coming.” And he gave a ghastly grin, sighed, and it was over.’

“We both sat down on the damp ground, and never spoke for nigh an hour. At last Tom said, ‘We ought to be back in the house, and trying to make ourselves useful, Paul.’

“I arose, and walked after him, not knowing well whither I was going. When we reached the little flower-garden, we could see into the dining-room. The branch of wax-candles were still lighted, but burnt down very low. All had left; there was nothing there but the dead man sitting up in his chair, with his eyes staring, and his chin fallen. ‘Craven-hearted scoundrels!’ cried Towers. ‘The last thing I said was to call in the servants, and say that their master had fainted; and see, they have run away out of sheer terror. Ain’t these hopeful fellows to go before the coroner’s inquest?’ I was trembling from head to foot all this while, and had to hold Towers by the arm to support myself. ‘You are not much better!’ said he, savagely. ‘Get to bed, and take a long sleep, man. Lock your door, and open it to none till I come to you.’ I staggered away as well as I could, and reached my room. Once alone there, I fell on my knees and tried to pray, but I could not. I could do nothing but cry — cry, as though my heart would burst; and I fell off asleep, at last, with my head on the bedside, and never awoke till the next day at noon. Oh!” cried he, in a tone of anguish, “do not ask me to recal more of this dreadful story; I’d rather follow the others to the scaffold, than I’d live over again that terrible day. But you know the rest — the whole world knows it. It was the ‘Awful Tragedy in Jersey’ of every newspaper of Eng-

land; even to the little 'cottage', in the print-shop windows, the curiosity of the town was gratified. The Pulpit employed the theme, to illustrate the life of the debauchee; and the Stage repeated the incidents in a melodrama. With a vindictive inquisitiveness, too, the Press continued to pry after each of us, whither we had gone, and what had become of us. I myself, at last, escaped further scrutiny by the accidental circumstance of a pauper, called Paul Hunt, having died in a poor-house, furnishing the journalist who recorded it one more occasion for moral reflection and eloquence. Collins lived, I know not how, or where. She sailed for Australia, but I believe never went beyond the Cape."

"And you never met her since?"

"Never."

"Nor have you held any correspondence together?"

"None, directly. I have received some messages; one to that purport I have already told you. Indeed, it was but t'other day that I knew for certain she was in Europe."

"What was she in appearance — what style and manner of person?"

"You shall guess before I tell you," said Paten, smiling sadly.

"A dark-eyed, dark-haired woman — brunette — tall — with a commanding look — thin lips — and strongly-marked chin."

"Here," said he, approaching the binnacle lantern, and holding out a miniature he had drawn from his breast — "here; you can recognise the accuracy of your description."

"But can that be like her?"

"It is herself; even the careless ease of the attitude, the voluptuous indolence of the 'pose,' is all her own."

"But she is the very type of feminine softness and delicacy. I never saw eyes more full of gentle meaning, nor a mouth more expressive of womanly grace."

"There is no flattery in the portrait; nay, it wants the great charm she excelled in — that ever changeful look, as thoughts of joy or sadness would flash across her."

"Good Heavens!" cried Stocmar. "How hard it is to connect this creature, as she looks here, with such a story!"

"Ah, my friend, these have been the cruel ones, from the earliest times we hear of. The more intensely they are womanly, the more unrelenting their nature."

"And what do you mean to do, Ludlow? for I own to you I think she is a hard adversary to cope with."

"I'll marry her, if she'll have me."

"Have you? Of course she will."

"She says not; and she generally keeps her word."

"But why should you wish to marry her, Ludlow? You have already told me that you know nothing of her means, or how she lives; and, certainly, the memories of the past give small guarantee for the future. As for myself, I own to you, if there was another woman —"

"Nay, nay," broke in Paten, "you have never seen her — never spoken to her."

"You forget, my dear fellow, that I have passed a life in an atmosphere of mock fascinations; that tinsel attractions and counterfeit graces would all fail with *me*."

"But who says they are factitious?" cried Paten,

angrily. "The money that passes from hand to hand, as current coin, may have some alloy in its composition a chemist might call base, but it will not serve to stamp it as fraudulent. I tell you, Stocmar, it is the whole fortune of a man's life to be associated with such a woman. They can mar or make you."

"More likely the first," muttered Stocmar. And then added aloud, "And as to her fortune, you actually know nothing."

"Nothing beyond the fact that there's money somewhere. The girl or she, I can't say which, has it."

"And of course, in your eyes, it's like a pool at écarté: you don't trouble your head who are contributors?"

"Not very much, if I win, Stocmar!" said he, resuming at once all the wonted ease of his jovial manner.

Stocmar walked the deck in deep thought. The terrible tale he had just heard, though not new in all its details, had impressed him fearfully, while at the same time he could not conceive how a man so burdened with a horrible past could continue either to enjoy the present or speculate on the future.

At last he said, "And have you no dread of recognition, Ludlow? Is the danger of being known and addressed by your real name not always uppermost with you?"

"No, not now. When I first returned to England, after leaving the Austrian service, I always went about with an uneasy impression upon me — a sort of feeling that when men looked at me they were trying to remember where, and when, and how, they had seen that face before; but up to this none have ever dis-

covered me, except Dell, the detective officer, whom I met one night at Cremorne, and who whispered me softly, 'Happy to see you, Mr. Hunt. Have you been long in England?' I affected at first not to understand him, and touching his hat politely, he said, 'Well, Sir — Jos. Dell. If you remember, I was *there* at the inquest.' I invited him to share a bottle of wine with me at once, and we parted like old friends. By the way," added he, "there was that old pyrotechnist of yours — that drunken rascal — *he* knew me, too."

"Well, you're not likely to be troubled with another recognition from him, Ludlow."

"How so? Is the fellow dead?"

"No; but I've shipped him to New York by the *Persia*. Truby, of the Bowery Theatre, has taken a three years' lease of him, and of course cocktails and juleps will shorten even that."

"*That* is a relief, by Jove!" cried Paten. "I own to you, Stocmar, the thought of being known by that man lay like a stone on my heart. Had you any trouble in inducing him to go?"

"Trouble? No. He went on board drunk; he'll be drunk all the voyage, and he'll land in America in the same happy state."

Paten smiled pleasantly at this picture of beatitude, and smoked on. "There's no doubt about it, Stocmar," said he, sententiously, "we all of us do make cowards of ourselves quite needlessly, imagining that the world is full of us, canvassing our characters and scrutinising our actions, when the same good world is only thinking of itself and its own affairs."

"That is true in part, Ludlow. But let us make

ourselves foreground figures, and, take my word for it, we'll not have to complain of want of notice."

Paten made a movement of impatience at this speech, that showed how little he liked the sentiment, and then said:

"There are the lights of Ostend. What a capital passage we have made! I can't express to you," said he, with more animation, "what a relief it is to me to feel myself on the soil of the Continent. I don't know how it affects others, but to me it seems as if there were greater scope and a freer room for a man's natural abilities there."

"I suppose you think we are cursed with 'respectability' at home?"

"The very thing I mean," said he, gaily; "there's nothing I detest like it."

"Colonel Paten," cried the steward, collecting his fees.

"Are you Colonel?" asked Stocmar, in a whisper.

"Of course I am, and very modest not to be Major-General. But here we are, inside the harbour already."

Were we free to take a ramble up the Rhine country, and over the Alps to Como, we might, perhaps, follow the steps of the two travellers we have here presented to our reader. They were ultimately bound for Italy, but in no wise tied by time or route. In fact, Mr. Stocmar's object was to seek out some novelties for the coming season. "Nihil humanum a me alienum puto" was his maxim. All was acceptable that was attractive. He catered for the most costly of all publics, and who will insist on listening to the sweetest voices, and

looking at the prettiest legs in Europe. He was on the look-out for both. What Ludlow Paten's object was the reader may, perhaps, guess without difficulty, but there was another "transaction" in his plan not so easily determined. He had heard much of Clara Hawke — to give her her true name — of her personal attractions and abilities, and he wished Stocmar to see and pronounce upon her. Although he possessed no pretension to dispose of her whatever, he held certain letters of her supposed mother in his keeping which gave him a degree of power he believed irresistible. Now, there is a sort of limited liability slavery at this moment recognised in Europe, by which theatrical managers obtain a lease of human ability, for a certain period, under nonage, and of which Paten desired to derive profit by letting out Clara as dancer, singer, comedian, or "figurante," according to her gifts; and this, too, was a purpose of the present journey.

The painter or the sculptor, in search of his model, has no higher requirements than those of form and symmetry; he deals solely with externals, while the impresario must carry his investigations far beyond the category of personal attractions, and soar into the lofty atmosphere of intellectual gifts and graces, bearing along with him, at the same time, a full knowledge of that public for whom he is proceeding; that fickle, changeful, fanciful public, who sometimes, out of pure satiety with what is best, begin to long for what is second rate. What consummate skill must be his who thus feels the pulse of fashion, recognising in its beat the indications of this or that tendency, whether "society" soars to the classic "Norma," or descends to the tawdry vulgarisms of the "Traviata." No man ever

accepted more implicitly than Mr. Stocmar the adage of "Whatever is, is best." The judgment of the day with him was absolute. The "world" *a toujours raison*, was his creed. When that world pronounced for music, he cried, "Long live Verdi!" when it decided for the Ballet, his toast was, "Legs against the field!" Now, at this precise moment, this same world had taken a turn for mere good looks — if it be not heresy to say "mere" to such a thing as beauty — and had actually grown a little wearied of roulades and pirouettes; and so Stocmar had come abroad, to see what the great slave market of Europe could offer him.

Let us suppose them, therefore, pleasantly meandering along through the Rhine-land, while we turn once more to those whom we have left beyond the Alps.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Fragment of a Letter.

THE following brief epistle from Mrs. Morris to her father will save the reader the tedious task of following the Heathcote family through an uneventful interval, and at the same time bring him to that place and period in which we wish to see him. It is dated Hôtel d'Italie, Florence:

"DEAR PAPA, — You are not to feel any shock or alarm at the black margin and wax of this epistle, though its object be to inform you that I am a widow, Captain Penthony Morris having died some eight months back in Upper India; but the news has only reached me now. In a word, I have thought it high time to put an end to this mythical personage, whose cruel treatment of me I had grown tired of recalling, and, I conclude, others of listening to. Now, although it may be very hard on you to go into mourning for the death of one who never lived, yet I must bespeak your grief, in so far as stationery is concerned, and that you write to me on the most wobegone of cream-laid, and with the most sorrow-struck of seals.

"There was, besides, another and most cogent reason for my being a widow just now. The Heathcotes are here, on their way to Rome, and, like all English people, eager to go everywhere, do everything,

and know everybody; the consequence is eternal junketing and daily dinner-parties. I need not tell you that in such a caravanserai as this is, some one would surely turn up who should recognise me; so there was nothing for it but to kill Captain M. and go into crape and seclusion. As my bereavement is only a sham, I perform the affliction without difficulty. Our mourning, too, becomes us, and, everything considered, the incident has spared us much sight-seeing and many odious acquaintances.

“As it is highly important that I should see and consult you, you must come out here at once. As the friend and executor of poor ‘dear Penthony,’ you can see me freely, and I really want your advice. Do I understand you aright about Ludlow? If so, the creature is a greater fool than I thought him. Marrying him is purely out of the question. Of all compacts, the connubial demands implicit credulity; and if this poor man’s tea were to disagree with him, he’d be screaming out for antidotes before the servants, and I conclude that he cannot expect *me* to believe in *him*. The offer you have made him on my part is a great and brilliant one, and, for the life of me, I cannot see why he should hesitate about it, though I, perhaps, suspect it to be this. Like most fast men — a very shallow class, after all — his notion is, that life, like a whist-party, requires an accomplice. Now, I would beg him to believe this is not the case, and that for two people who can play their cards so well as we can, it is far better to sit down at separate tables, where no suspicion of complicity can attach to us. I, at least, understand what suits my own interest, which

is distinctly and emphatically to have nothing to do with him. You say that he threatens — threatens to engulf us both. If he were a woman, the menace would frighten me, but men are marvellously conservative in their selfishness, and so I read it as mere threat.

“It is, I will say, no small infliction to carry all this burden of the past through a present rugged enough with its own difficulties. To feel that one can be compromised, and, if compromised, ruined at any moment — to walk with a half-drawn indictment over one — to mingle in a world where each fresh arrival may turn out accuser, — is very, very wearisome, and I long for security. It is for this reason I have decided on marrying Sir William instead of his son. The indiscretion of a man of his age taking a wife of mine will naturally lead to retirement and reclusion from the world, and we shall seek out some little-visited spot where no awkward memories are like to leave their cards on us. I have resigned myself to so much in life, that I shall submit to all this with as good a grace as I have shown in other sacrifices. Of course L. can spoil this project — he can upset the boat — but he ought to remember, if he does, that he was never a good swimmer. Do try and impress this upon him; there are usually some flitting moments of every day when he is capable of understanding a reason. Catch one of these, dear pa, and profit by it. It is by no means certain that Miss L. would accept him; but, certainly, smarting as she is under all manner of broken ties, the moment is favourable, and the stake a large one. Nor is there much time to lose, for it seems that young Heathcote cannot

persuade the Horse Guards to give him even a 'Cornetcy,' and is in despair how he is to re-enter the service; the inevitable consequence of which will be a return home here, and, after a while, a reconciliation. It is only wise people who ever know that the science of life is opportunity, everything being possible at some one moment, which, perhaps, never recurs again.

"I scarcely know what to say about Clara. She has lost her spirits, though gained in looks, and she is a perfect mope, but very pretty withal. She fancies herself in love with a young college man lately here, who won all the disposable hearts in the place, and might have had a share even in mine, if he had asked for it. The greater fool he that he did not, since he wanted exactly such guidance as I could give to open the secret door of success to him. By the way, has his father died, or what has become of him? In turning over some papers t'other day, the name recurred with some far from pleasant recollections associated with it. Scientific folk used to tell us that all the constituents of our mortal bodies became consumed every seven years of life. And why, I would ask, ought we not to start with fresh memories as well as muscles, and ignore any past beyond that short term of existence? I am perfectly convinced it is carrying along bygones, whether of events or people, that constitutes the greatest ill of life. One so very seldom repents of having done wrong, and is so very, very sorry to have lost many opportunities of securing success, that really the past is all sorrow.

"You have forgotten to counsel me about Clara.

The alternative lies between the stage and a convent. Pray say which of the two, in these changeful times, gives the best promise of permanence; and believe me,

"Your affectionate daughter,
"LOUISA."

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